LABOUR IN THE COMMONWEALTH

G. D. H. COLE, M.A.

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Capital & Labour
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LABOUR IN THE COMMONWEALTH

First Published, 1918
Reprinted, 1919
Reprinted, 1920

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LABOUR IN THE COMMONWEALTH

A Book for the Younger Generation

BY

G. D. H. COLE

(*Author of* "The World of Labour," "Self-Government in Industry," *etc.*)

THE SWARTHMORE PRESS LTD.
72 OXFORD STREET
LONDON
W.1

4757

No longer I complain
That knowledge brings no joy,
That all the art I gain
Is cunning to destroy.

Destroyers, we create:
Creating, we undo.
All things that have been great
Out of destruction grew.

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CHAPTER I: THE HUMANITY OF LABOUR

MEN'S tendency to personify those things which move them to wonder, fear, or any other human emotion has often been the theme of poets and of philosophers. But men have no less a tendency to despoil of personality those persons who do not move them to emotion, and whose actions and passions they do not understand. There is no stronger example of this second tendency than the "depersonification" of the working classes by the economists and politicians of the last century. In the realm of economic and social theory the majority of educated men have spoken, ever since the Industrial Revolution, in terms of abstractions. Not merely the "economic man" of the "dismal science," but, still more, the "Labour" which the economists have loved to contrast with "Capital," is an abstraction which has vitiated thinking and perverted economic science from its proper function.

In setting out to write of "Labour in the Commonwealth," I have no such lifeless abstraction in mind. I shall write, not of abstract Labour as a term in the economic relation of Capital and Labour, but of individual men and women who, taken together, form the vast majority of the People in any Commonwealth. Similarly, in speaking of the Commonwealth itself, I shall have in mind, not an abstract "Power" among the great States of the world, but these same men and

women, with others fundamentally like them, though held apart from them to-day by legal and conventional barriers of property and caste.

I gladly admit that something has been done already to break down the fiction which regards Labour as an abstract quantity or force, a factor in the cost of production, rather than a collective name for the makers and users of the world's goods. The growth of economic science in the direction of "applied economics," the application of psychology to social questions, and the beginnings of a philosophical theory of Society of a less "high and dry" kind than satisfied the Victorian philosophers, are all evidences of the change that is coming. Moreover, among the workers themselves there has been a strong growth of theory and practice which asserts the humanity of Labour and its claim to freedom and self-direction.

The "man in the street," however, is the last person to be touched either by the intellectual ferment of philosophic and economic theory or by the growth of a new spirit among the organised workers. If he is not inaccessible to new ideas when he hears them, it is at least very difficult to get him to hear or to listen. And how much of the "man in the street" is in every one of us! As soon as we allow our critical faculty to go to sleep, and in every sphere of thought in which that faculty has not been awakened, we are one and all "men in the street," creatures of the prejudices and the presuppositions of our time. Indeed, the

position is even worse than this; for these prejudices and presuppositions are not the creations of our own age, but the leavings of an age that is gone.

Thus, even if we repudiate in our conscious thoughts the idea that Labour is a "thing," passive and not active in its nature, that idea is still present in our half-consciousness, and dominates to a great extent the less alert part of our minds. In the midst of a sympathetic consideration of the "aims and claims of Labour," we find ourselves, instinctively and by force of habit, slipping back into the idea that Labour is something impersonal, or at most only half-personal. Being ourselves only half-rational, we cannot at once, by means of a new intellectual conviction, expel all the prejudices and presuppositions into which the intellectual convictions of the past have congealed. It is only by close and constant endeavour that we can keep ourselves from bondage to our immediate intellectual ancestors.

A few examples should serve to make quite clear the point of view from which too many of us always, and all of us sometimes, are still prone to regard Labour. The crowning example is in what we are learning to call "the wage-system." From the point of view of the manufacturer or of the costs manager in a factory, "Labour" is an element in the cost of production. So much for rent, buildings, etc.; so much for machinery and wear and tear of machinery; so much for raw mate-

rial; so much for management; and so much for Labour. Result, a finished product with a cost of production including all these charges. Some of the elements in cost of production are fixed, and some are fluctuating. Rent is a fixed charge; but the cost of raw material varies from time to time, and so does the cost of Labour. What, then, determines the cost of Labour? Broadly speaking, exactly what determines the cost of materials and commodities of every kind—a basic charge nominally fixed by their own cost of production, *plus* a floating charge determined by supply and demand. The "Labour Market" is, no doubt, less "nervy" and liable to fluctuation than the "Metal Market"; but the principle at work in both is essentially the same, and the *entrepreneur* and the manager necessarily have their eye on both.

It is admitted that this picture of the "Labour Market" is to some extent an abstraction, and that other causes modify those mentioned above in determining the cost of Labour. But this is true also of the Metal Market, or the Produce Market, or any other market in which commodities have a price. It remains none the less true that, from the point of view of the costs expert in a factory, Labour is a commodity just as much as a machine or a bale of cotton is a commodity.

I do not say this in order to cast any reflection upon the costs expert. It is his business to regard Labour in this abstract light, and, as long as commodities are produced for sale under individualist

conditions, he cannot act in any other way. My complaint is that this purely abstract method of regarding Labour for the limited purpose of certain commercial calculations is habitually erected into a solemn theory, or, worst of all, a solemn presupposition that is not theorised about because it is not questioned. The average man, and most of the men who are by no means average, calmly accept this buying and selling of Labour on a commodity basis as if it were something normal, natural, and inevitable. Among such men may be the most ardent of social reformers or even of Socialists; but it has never occurred to them to question the wage-system or the "commodity" theory of Labour.

Thus, there has been a movement in recent years towards legislation designed to secure to every worker employed a certain minimum wage. The Trade Boards Act, the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Act, and the Corn Production Act have given this movement legal recognition in the case of certain industries, and the results have been beneficial on the whole, even if they have been meagre. But here we are concerned with fundamentals. How many of the advocates of minimum wage legislation think of it as exactly similar to the policy, adopted to some extent during the war period, of fixing minimum prices for Stock Exchange securities? How many, moreover, would be particularly struck by the comparison if they thought of it? Yet it is surely clear that the policy of the legislative minimum is an explicit

recognition, if it is also to some extent a mitigation, of the commodity theory of Labour.

The parallel is, indeed, seen most clearly of all in the Corn Production Act, which, in exacting from the farmer a minimum price for the quasi-commodity Labour, guarantees to him a minimum price for the actual commodity corn.

The commodity theory of Labour is fundamentally inconsistent with the recognition of the fact that "Labour" consists of human beings. It is obviously absurd that the health and welfare of human beings should be determined by market considerations or by a "law of supply and demand." The conscience of the civilised world repudiated slavery because it felt that to belong to another is inconsistent with human personality. But, if it is wrong for a man to be bought and sold for life at a price, it is no less wrong for a man to be bought and sold for a year or a month or a day. It is in the buying and selling, and not in its duration, that the fundamental wrong is done.

"Yes," say our prejudices and our presuppositions, "that is all very well; but we must face facts. How is it possible to get away from the buying and selling of Labour? What will become of the cost of production, of the laws which fix prices, of all the tidy system of economics which we have always assumed, even if we have not fully understood it?" What, indeed? But the reply is that such questions could not be asked if we had got really out of our minds the idea that "Labour" is a

"thing," and not a collective noun denoting a number of human beings regarded in a particular aspect.

The world has abolished chattel-slavery; but it is significant of the dominance of the abstract idea of Labour that it has lost no time in introducing new equivalents for it. The wage-bargain of the labourer in England is several removes from chattel-slavery; but the indentured Labour and the other forms of Labour under direct or indirect coercion which prevail very largely in our dealings with less "civilised" races are very near to it indeed. Moreover, even the wage-bargain, though it is limited and circumscribed in many ways, is still of the essence of slavery. Indeed, in one respect it regards Labour from an even more abstract standpoint than chattel-slavery itself. It abstracts the Labour from the labourer, and, while it preserves for the labourer at least a nominal personal freedom, it thereby absolves itself from regarding his labour as in any sense human. The labourer is nominally free, and a man: his labour is merely so much "Power," to be bought at a price and used in the interest, and for the profit, of the purchaser.

Of course, there is Progress, with a big "P," which is itself not the smallest of our prejudices and presuppositions. The labourer is really better fed and clothed to-day than he was a hundred years ago, though I should have more difficulty in finding an answer if the comparison were with a still

earlier period. My point is, not that we are going back, but that our theories and presuppositions are wrong, and that even when we try to mend our social system, we are still the victims of ideas which are overripe for repudiation. We no longer in most cases want to treat Labour as a commodity or a "thing"; but we continue to do so because we know no better and have not flung off the myths of the Industrial Revolution.

Good-will is, in a sense, the basis upon which the fabric of any new Society must be built. But good-will alone is a terribly dangerous possession. It leads many a man not to mend but to muddle, not to build a new Society but to patch the outworn fabric of the old. The making of the new Commonwealth is a matter not merely of benevolence or of good intentions; it is above all a matter of understanding.

There are two senses in which, whether we are of Labour or not, we must seek to understand Labour. We must understand what the workers themselves are thinking, feeling, hoping, and imagining; and we must have a theory, or vision, of the place of Labour in the Commonwealth. To the making of these two understandings this book is a contribution. It seeks to explain what Labour and the Labour Movement are like, and it is also an exposition of a personal theory of Labour's place in the Commonwealth. Armed with this double understanding, we can no longer regard Labour as a commodity or as a "thing."

The second example which I propose to take is an example, not so much of our tendency to treat Labour as a "thing," as of the false direction which our minds may take when we begin to escape from this tendency. Those who regard Labour as a "thing" may desire to keep it in good condition, just as a prudent manufacturer employs the best machinery and keeps it in excellent order. They may fully realise the "economy of high wages," and the advantages of healthy factory conditions and of "welfare work." Many "benevolent" employers and many members of the public are in this position, though even this truth has taken long to secure an appreciation which is still very limited, and there are still very many who are not convinced of it. Increasingly, however, it is beginning to dawn upon "good" and "bad" employers alike that their workers possess some at least of the attributes of humanity. Often, this fact strikes them first as a disagreeable surprise. They find that the Labour which they employ is not putting into its work the last ounce of its strength, and they at once accuse it of "ca' canny" and "restriction of output." For a while, they waste their breath in recrimination; but then it occurs to them that if Labour is human enough to "speed down," it may also be human enough to be speeded up by suitable inducements. Thereupon follows a campaign in favour of "payment by results," that is to say, of the offering to the worker of a financial inducement to produce more. Higher earnings are promised

for greater output, and the employer feels that, in offering such inducements, he is fully recognising the humanity of Labour and largely solving the industrial problem.

In reality, while the offer of such inducements is in a certain degree a recognition of Labour's humanity, it only recognises Labour as animated by the baser passions. Those who set out to solve the industrial problem by such means regard Labour, if not as a "thing" or exactly as an "animal," at any rate as a being of a distinctly lower order than their own. They admit the existence in the workers of one human quality, but they do not recognise its possession of higher qualities.

In criticising this attitude, I do not of course mean to suggest that Labour is above such inducements, or that it is immune from the lower human passions. Its mere economic position, apart from everything else, would compel it to take notice of the prospect of gain. But I do most strongly affirm that the industrial question cannot be solved, even for a moment, in this way, and that Labour is human in a far larger and higher sense. The recognition of humanity is, above all else, the recognition of the right to freedom, and to equality of opportunity and of status.

Of the recognition of these attributes of Labour there is still lamentably little sign among our governing classes, or indeed among educated men and women. Most of us still tend to think of the

"condition of England question" in terms of remuneration, of material inducements and material privations. Trade Unions we tend to regard as existing for the maintenance of wage-rates, unrest as a trouble to be quelled by the offer of a bribe. It does not occur to most of us that the system by which a man sells his labour to another is degrading, quite apart from the price which he secures by its sale. We feel only surprise, or even incredulity, when we hear of workers who object to "speeding up" even when higher earnings will certainly be the reward of greater effort.

Yet another instance of our failure to appreciate the humanity of Labour is to be found in the current attitude towards the Trade Union Movement itself. There have been many cases in recent years in which the "rank and file" of the Trade Unions, instead of following with unquestioning obedience the dictates of their leaders, have preferred to think, and even to act, for themselves. At once the cry has gone up from the Press, the politicians, and the public that the Trade Unions need "discipline," and that, unless the leaders can enforce obedience upon the rank and file, the whole Trade Union Movement stands discredited and has no claim to public sympathy. Moreover, this attitude is too often imitated by Trade Union leaders themselves.

The assumption that "discipline" is the first duty of Labour is sheer capitalist morality. It is no more the first duty of the workers to be disci-

plined, in the sense of obeying without question the advice of their leaders, than it is the duty of the electorate to prostrate itself at the mere mention of an Order in Council. Trade Union leaders are not the "General Staff" of an "Army" of Labour, but the servants of the rank and file, chosen to do their will. If we find that Labour has a will of its own, we ought to rejoice at this further manifestation of its humanity; but we are only too apt to resent its interference with the plans which we lay for the promotion of its well-being.

Lord Leverhulme's panacea of the six hours' day may seem to imply a recognition of the human rights of Labour, in that it does recognise the importance and value of leisure in the workman's life. But Lord Leverhulme is really almost as far as the rest from a true understanding of Labour. His "leisure" is still conceived too largely as a "rest-pause," designed to fit the worker to execute more efficiently the tasks of the factory, and for the calling out of the energy stored in the worker by this leisure Lord Leverhulme still relies mainly on monetary inducements, provided in this case in the form of profit-sharing. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that Lord Leverhulme is unaware of the absolute value of leisure quite apart from any results it may have in increased efficiency; but he still argues as if the increased efficiency, rather than the good life, were the principal object to be attained. Moreover, he quite fails to understand that, however much leisure Labour may be given,

no fundamental change can take place in its status unless the conditions of work, as well as of leisure, are altered.

I come back again and again to this point: that the key to the industrial problem lies in the status of Labour in the workshop and at its work. As long as the conditions of work remain such that Labour has to sell its man-power to Capital, surrendering in return for a "living wage" all control over production or over the product, it is useless to talk as if the humanity of Labour were recognised. Such conditions are themselves the very denial of Labour's humanity; and those who uphold them on the ground that there is no other way in which industry can be carried on are confronted with the great test of all social theorists. Their argument is essentially a defence of a class-Society, of a division of the community into grades and classes with not merely different social functions, but different degrees of rights.

We are familiar with those ghouls who are fond of telling us that art, leisure, culture, beauty, understanding, and all the finer values of life can be only for the few and must rest for ever upon the sweat of the brows and the degradation of the souls of the many. Surely, against such whited sepulchres of civilisation, we are with William Morris when he cries, "I do not want art for a few, any more than I want education for a few, or freedom for a few."

Many, however, who will readily echo these

sentiments in favour of a democratic art, will yet assume no less readily the indefinite continuance of a caste-division in industry. "The function of management," they will tell us, "is to manage: the function of Labour is to do what it is told as efficiently as possible." It is my point that this caste-division of functions is no less immoral in industry than it is in politics or in any other sphere.

In April, 1917, a general Conference of "Employment Managers" from all over the United States met at Philadelphia. This is how one of their principal speakers addressed the Conference:—"The underlying thought [in the Employment Managers' Association] is that the handling of human beings in the relation of employer and employee is a professional job."

"No doubt," some of my readers will say; "but we all know that in America they are not quite right in the head on such questions." Very well: hear what no less an authority than Mr. Sidney Webb has to say in his recent book, "The Works Manager To-day":—

"First let me remind you that you belong to a brain-working profession, just as much as the lawyer or the doctor, the architect or the engineer, though your profession is only now becoming conscious of itself as a distinct profession, the profession of management. . . . What we are concerned with here, whether we are considering any grade of managers or superintendents, is

the quite distinct profession of organising men. . . . I beg you to think of yourselves . . . as professional managers charged with a distinct function . . . namely, the function of handling human nature in conjunction with machinery and materials with a view to its perfect co-operation in an industrial enterprise."

Mr. Webb and Mr. Meyer Bloomfield, the one a British Socialist and the other an American Employment Manager, are essentially at one in their outlook on this aspect of the industrial question. Both of them believe and assume that the " manipulation of men " is a science to be learnt and controlled by the expert manipulator.

I do not believe this. Surely Mr. Webb and the American manager are here missing an absolutely vital and fundamental difference. The lawyer, the doctor, the architect, and the engineer are alike in this, that their bond of professional unity is a common technique and a common knowledge which others do not possess. No doubt the manager has, and still more should have, a technique and a knowledge of his own; but he differs from these other professionals in being largely, and even primarily, as they admit, a disciplinarian, a " manipulator of men." As such, he is essentially different from those professionals who are technical advisers where he is a " captain of industry," or at least a commander of men. In this, the manager resembles not the lawyer or the architect, but the professional politician or the Civil Service adminis-

trator. His essential characteristic is that he has to order the actions of other men. It is therefore as dangerous to endow him with the full status of a governing profession as it is to endow the politician or the bureaucrat with full authority. Just as the community ought to demand and maintain direct democratic control over its political administrators, so industrial Labour will claim direct democratic control over those who seek to manipulate its industrial conditions.

The claim to democratic control in industry follows logically and immediately upon the recognition of the humanity of Labour. As soon as we get out of our heads the idea that Labour is something that can be abstracted from the labourer, from the man who possesses Labour-power, it is at once evident that all the arguments in favour of political democracy apply with no less force in the industrial sphere. It is sometimes urged that this parallel does not hold because, whereas the object of politics is the "good life," the object of industry is just the production of commodities, so that industrial organisation is a science and political organisation an art. The examination of this fallacy will be the last of our instances of the prevailing habit of regarding Labour as an inanimate abstraction.

There is, of course, a sense in which the object of industry is the "production of commodities." But there is also a sense in which the object of politics is the provision of drains. The spiritual

meaning of politics finds expression largely in the provision for material needs and against material dangers. In so far as the State promotes the "good life," it does so very largely by providing for the security of material things, for the feeding of school children, for the physical well-being of the community, for reasonable sanitation, and so on. But who but a lunatic or a parish-pump politician would conclude from this that politics is a purely material science? The lunatic results of such a conclusion have been admirably depicted by Mr. G. K. Chesterton in one of the most fascinating of his novels, "The Ball and the Cross." The point of that book, as I understand it, is the startling paradox that men are, after all, neither more nor less than men.

If it is true that, largely as politics are preoccupied with material considerations, they are none the less very much more than material, is not the same equally true of industry? What gives to politics their spiritual content is not their "political" character, but the fact that they have to do with the affairs of men and women. Industry too, in a very real and fundamental sense, has to do with the affairs of men and women, and this gives it a spiritual content not at all inferior to that of politics.

The fact, of course, is that spiritual values necessarily express themselves largely in material forms. The odd fact that man is at once soul and body forces itself into every social relationship, and binds

together spirit and matter in a fashion which the philosophers have found infinitely troublesome to explain. It is the most vicious of abstractions to take an aspect of human life and say of it: "This at least is purely material." That is, in a very real sense, "the sin against the Holy Ghost."

Yet those who stress the importance of the industrial question have continually flung at them the taunt of being materialists and of conceiving life in the sordid terms of economics. As if a man at work in a factory were not just as much a man as a man at a political meeting, or in a church, or at a theatre. It would indeed be a poor look-out for humanity if men were doomed for ever to surrender their individuality when they enter a factory, and only to resume it when they are tired at the end of the working day. Those who fix their eyes on industry do so not because they believe that industry enshrines all life's fundamental values, but because they believe that the custom of regarding industry as a purely material and dehumanised science is one of the worst abuses of our time, and the key to much of the materialism that dominates our Society as a whole. In short, we ought to pay attention to industry not because we are materialists, but absolutely and precisely because we are spiritualists. Man is and must be largely an industrial worker; and, if for that reason alone, industry is and must be a spiritual thing.

We must throw off, then, the conception of

industrial organisation as a science, and we must regard it as no less an art than politics. This does not mean that there is no science in it; for every artist must master the technique of his medium. But it does mean that the object of industry is not merely "the production of commodities": it is "the production of good commodities by free men under democratic conditions."

Let us look at industry, not as a science apart, but as a vital function of communal life. If we do this we shall at once see Labour, not as an abstraction in relation to other abstractions, but as men co-operating in a common service. Seeing Labour in this light, we shall surely recognise the enormity of the present industrial system. Is this system, we must ask ourselves, consistent with our theory of life? Is it rational or just or tolerable? Is it even efficient according to its own narrow standards? Surely to employ Labour in industry in such a way as to ignore its humanity is as if a "sourdough" in the Yukon were to wash patiently the bed of a river, preserving the gravel and throwing away the gold.

Moreover, let us not forget that the employer's claim upon Labour is in the nature of a mortgage or debenture, or at least of a first preference. He takes so much energy out of the worker before the worker is allowed to take any for himself. And how few workers are in a position to "declare a dividend" on their ordinary shares! By the time they leave their work, their vital energy has been

used up; the employer debenture-holder has claimed all, and the workers have nothing left over for themselves. That is a simple and sufficient reason for the difference in "culture" between the workers and their betters.

This would be bad enough if the work on which the energy of the mass of the people is used up had in it anything ennobling or awakening, or were done under conditions which would serve to awaken the sense of freedom and responsibility. If that were so, the workman would have little more to grumble at than the overworked professional, who often overworks himself because he loves his job. But the fact, of course, is that most of the work of "Labour," in the ordinary sense of the term, is not awakening but deadening. So far from calling out the sense of freedom and creation, or from stimulating the worker's individuality, it is usually dull, and often actually unpleasant, or worse, degrading. Moreover, the conditions of discipline and subordination imposed from above under which the work is done make it additionally destructive of human character.

The effect of this system is not merely negative: it is positively harmful. It not merely does not make men human: it definitely makes them inhuman. Moreover, its effect is not confined to working hours or to the workmen themselves: it poisons the springs of Society, and makes the mass of our people largely unfit for the "good life." It affects the rich no less than the poor: it stamps

materialism and inhumanity upon the face of civilisation.

"The millions, mostly fools," who were enfranchised during the last century—the millions more, still mostly fools, who were enfranchised only the other day—are alike the victims of the industrial system. They have not learnt self-government: most of them know little of the free play of human thought, though we cannot altogether rob them of human emotion. Most have been trained to subservience: a few to power. But the power is no less vicious than the subservience; for it is largely illegitimate class-power or money-power over other men and women. Who believes that our ruling-classes would have enfranchised the many if they believed that the many would know how to use their nominal power?

The industrial system, I cannot too often repeat, is in great measure the key to the paradox of political democracy. Why are the many nominally supreme, but actually powerless? Largely because the circumstances of their lives do not accustom or fit them for power or responsibility. A servile system in industry inevitably reflects itself in political servility and in a servile Society.

Where, then, lies our hope? In the humanity of men and women, and in nothing else. Abstract "Labour" remains an abstraction still; for the spirit that is in men and women cannot be killed, though it can be warped and thwarted in its normal growth. It is warped and thwarted to-day, and the

re-creation of humanity will not be an easy task. Out of the valley of the shadow of Capitalism there is no easy passage. But youth at least, when it is not left dead upon the battlefields of the world, is hearing the cry of freedom. Old men may be determined to put back all the skeletons of the nations into the cupboards from which the war has brought them forth; but youth has had its fill of the Elder Statesmen. And to youth I commend the verses that I have set upon the title-page of this book.

CHAPTER II: THE COMMONWEALTH

IF "Labour" is a collective name for human beings, what is the Commonwealth? It is our perverse pleasure to personify the Commonwealth, while we "depersonify" the human beings of whom it consists. We speak of the Commonwealth as of some great and all-inclusive personality, in which all other personalities are absorbed, and beside which the individual is nothing. We philosophise about the limited and dependent character of the individual human being; but we lose ourselves in admiration of the ultimate and self-dependent reality of the Commonwealth.

This is an essentially false conception. It is of the essence of the individual human soul that it is individual and cannot be absorbed into anything else. Membership of the Commonwealth no more detracts from its individuality than membership of a glee-party or a Dorcas Society. If the Commonwealth can claim personality at all, it can do so only in a sense which is consistent with the full individuality of all its members.

That in such a sense the Commonwealth is individual and even personal I have no desire to deny. Wherever men come together animated by a common purpose or sympathy or idea, a new personality and a new individuality are created. There is a soul of Britain, just as there is a soul of Labour, or a soul of the United Order of Ancient Buffaloes But this group soul, so far from detracting from the soul of the individuals who enter into it, is itself an

enhancement of their souls. It is not an individual absorbing their wills and individualities: it is an additional means of expression for them.

The most painful thing about these sentiments is that everyone will profess to agree with them. Let me hasten to assure the greybeards that they do not really agree with me. They contend that the individual human being expresses himself through his Commonwealth in some finer and diviner way than in his own being; that his greatest self-realisation is to lose himself in the great soul of his country; and a lot of similar nonsense. I contend that, whereas a man may express himself largely through his Commonwealth or some other group to which he belongs, there is no inherent superiority in such expression over his purely personal expression of his own individuality. Indeed. I contend that his individuality is the fundamentally important thing, of which all groups, including the Commonwealth itself, are merely projections.

It has been unkindly and most unjustly said of a certain neutral nation that its fault is "giving too little and asking too much." This is pre-eminently the fault of the Commonwealth. "Existing," as Aristotle said, "for the good life," the Commonwealth tends always to erect itself into an end, whereas it is properly and by its very nature a means. Why human beings exist is a question we can answer only with the words "Ask me another"; but, if we go on to ask why the

Commonwealth exists, we can give at least an answer that is not obvious nonsense. It exists in order that the men and women in it, and their children and their children's children, may have, in the fullest sense of the words, "a good time." Still more, if we ask why any particular form of human association exists, we can say either that it exists for certain ends or that it has no reason for existing at all. The Socialist Movement, for instance, exists because the men and women who compose it want certain definable changes in the spirit and form of social organisation: the Royal Academy has no reason at all for cumbering Piccadilly.

The Commonwealth, then, is not an "end in itself," but a means to a good time. It is not a sacred being possessed of Godhead, and calling for human sacrifice as its daily right, but a convenience, or rather a synthesis of conveniences. And its right to sacrifice is limited to the sacrifices men and women offer to it freely, because they see, in the particular sacrifice made, a means to a good time, not necessarily for themselves, but certainly for some individual person or persons.

Moloch, in short, is out of date as a divinity; and Hegel is hardly less out of date as a high priest. It is no doubt a very wonderful thing that men associate in a great Commonwealth, just as it is very wonderful that they make such complicated machines, or that they have discovered wireless telegraphy. But, so far from making man feel small

in face of the great Commonwealth, these things ought to make him swell to Gargantuan proportions in his own imagination. For it is for men and women that all these wonders exist, and it is by men and women that they have been created.

With this preamble, let us try to analyse rather more closely the nature of Commonwealth, and more especially the present character of the Commonwealth in which we live. For it will be news to no one except the Hegelian philosophers that there are actually many Commonwealths. It is true that these philosophers are fond of writing, in their philosophic moments, as if there were only one Commonwealth, and, even when they descend to practical politics and have perforce to recognise the existence of "others," as if these "others" were only imitations, and theirs the only genuine article. This political "solipsism," however, need not detain us long.

There are few things more remarkable than this tendency of the theorists of Commonwealth to speak as if there were only a single example of the genus. They philosophise sagely about the fundamental nature of Commonwealth, and the relation to it of men and women, for all the world as though this exhausted the categories of social theory. Yet it is fundamentally important to remember, whenever we discuss the relations of men and a Commonwealth, that there are many other Commonwealths to which men stand in relation. The relation differs widely from case to case, though there is

behind it an identity which is independent of differences in custom or constitution, because it rests on the fundamentally social nature of human beings.

In analysing our own Commonwealth, then, let us always remember that there are others, and that these others have not merely important similarities to our own, but are also in a sense fundamentally of the same kind. "The Commonwealth," if we are to speak so of it, is not self-contained, but has many relations to, and dependences upon, other Commonwealths. This does not in any sense destroy its identity or diminish its importance; but, if we bear this point in mind, we shall be likely to avoid some dangerous pitfalls that may otherwise beset our path.

If the Commonwealth is not self-contained externally, neither is it simple or single in its internal relations. The men and women who are of it are not absolutely isolated units who are absorbed or fused into its nature: they have their own individual habits, theories, emotions and purposes which they refuse to surrender. Moreover, they are grouped in a number of ways, and one individual may be a member of many groups. The same man may be at once a "free and independent elector" of Bethnal Green and a member of the Leather Workers' Union, the Baptist Church, and the True Temperance League. Into no one of these organisations does he put the whole of his personality, nor into all of them taken together; for he may be also a good father and husband, a

regular patron of the Surrey Cricket Club, and a host of other things. Every man is, indeed, a host in himself, and to regard him as absorbed into any group or collective organisation is to be guilty of a vicious and inhuman abstraction.

The vast tissue of social organisation which the modern Commonwealth has built up is infinitely diverse, and affords an infinite variety of opportunities for communal self-expression. But all this tissue, so far from superseding or transcending the individuals who compose it, can only be built up and can only survive while their active will sustains it.

Naturally, at different times and in different Commonwealths, different forms of social organisation rise to prominence. In the modern industrial Commonwealths, the maximum amount of human energy and will tends to flow into industrial and economic organisation. The principal grouping in the great Commonwealths of to-day is really that into social castes or classes based upon economic functions. The great "industrialists" not merely enter, but penetrate and even saturate upper-class Society, where the sheep's clothing of culture is worn but lightly over the wolf-skin of industrial power. They throng into the House of Lords for honour's sake, and into the House of Commons for more solid and sufficient reasons. They dominate the Churches, which must live by their bounty; they evict the hereditary landowner from his acres and turn his country houses into a dis-

persed Brighton. Nor do they forget to organise in the sphere on which their power is based. They have their Associations of Employers and of Merchants—their Chambers of Commerce, their Federation of British Industries, and their British Trade Corporation. They take health-giving exercise on the golf-course and on the Stock Exchange: they are equally at home at a levée or a company meeting. In short, they are organised, not perfectly, but at least purposefully and with effect. And they are every day organising more strongly.

On the other hand, Labour too is organised. The workers have their Trade Unions and their Co-operative Societies to protect them in some measure from exploitation. But they have also their Friendly Societies, their Clubs and their infinite network of associations of every sort. Their country houses are at Blackpool and Southend, and their House of Lords a grateful country maintains for them under every Board of Guardians. In short, they have their proletarian culture which hardly touches at any point the culture of their lords and masters.

This picture is no doubt a simplification—some will say a gross misrepresentation and misunderstanding. But is it either of the latter things? It misses out, no doubt, the very sections to which this book is principally addressed—the middle-classes who are neither the captains nor the privates of the industrial army. But is it not right to miss

them out? They have no unity, no common voice, no effective organisation. They are not a class, but a buffer: and they can have no distinctive character or organisation of their own. They are necessary to the Commonwealth, and they do much of its best work; but in the direction of it they have only that share which the other classes choose to allow them, or they can seize while the others are busy contending for mastery.

I do not mean that it is the fate of the middle-class to be ground to powder between the upper and the nether millstone. It is not. They perform many functions which are essential to the ruling classes, and many which are essential to Labour, and they are therefore certain of survival. But they have to choose on which side they will be. They cannot for long successfully be a side of their own. For they have behind them none of the "powers" which count for most in the struggle of to-day: neither money-power nor man-power, neither the actual power of Capital nor the potential power of Labour.

The Commonwealth, then, tends to express itself more and more, in its internal structure, through organisation on a class-basis. It would perhaps be too much to say that it expresses itself as a class-war between different classes; but it does increasingly tend to express itself internally as a class-struggle. There are those who profess to believe that, after the war, we shall put such "sordid antagonisms" behind us; but those who take this

view are usually either too good for this world or too bad for the next. The whole structure of the Commonwealth to-day is such as to express itself inevitably in a struggle of social classes, more or less acute according to circumstances and to leading, but present all the time, and only the more unpleasant the more it is suppressed and forced underground.

Of course, the real character of this struggle is not fully recognised. It still appears, not as the normal expression of the industrial and social system, but only as a periodic and recurrent disturbance of it. There are still many who believe that these disturbances are all the work of wicked agitators and mischief-makers, and do not realise that there is scant need for the *making* of mischief in this world. But surely a fair-minded analysis of the existing social order would convince even these of the futility of denying any longer the obvious facts of what we are pleased to call "civilisation."

To many people the conception of the class-struggle at once suggests the most terrible imaginings. They see visions of red revolution, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness walking the streets, tumbrils, massacres and what not. Believe me, I have no wish to conjure up any of these spectres. The class-struggle may be as orderly as a prayer-meeting, and as inspired by brotherly love as Mr. Lansbury's articles in the HERALD. I am merely drawing attention to the plain fact that the Com-

monwealth of to-day is divided sharply into social classes, and that these classes inevitably struggle for the mastery. Whether they conduct their struggle amicably or with hate, by constitutional or by unconstitutional means, is, for the present argument, irrelevant.

My point is that, while these social classes remain, the struggle between them is bound to continue, and each class will inevitably organise largely for that struggle. Thus, the energy and goodwill which ought to flow into the common service are necessarily diverted into the struggle. Instead of seeking the good one of another, we seek perforce the good of a particular social class.

Internally, then, the Commonwealth to-day can only express itself in terms of a class-struggle. The machinery of State is dominated by the classes which possess the actual political and economic authority, while the classes whose power is only potential are driven to build up counter-organisations designed for the capture of the State and the industrial machine. It is true that there are questions on which the contending classes co-operate: it is true that the lines of division between classes are neither clear-cut nor definite: it is true that the majority in all classes has no full awareness of the nature of the conflict. But these facts do not invalidate the general thesis that, in its internal relations, the Commonwealth tends more and more to express itself as a struggle between social classes contending for economic and political authority.

Externally, the position is somewhat different. As soon as it is time to face outwards towards other Commonwealths, the Commonwealth tends to express itself as a single homogeneous organisation. Group and class loyalties, and, still more, individual rights, tend to be suppressed in the interests of unity. However riven by internal dissensions, each Commonwealth still tends to seem, to those who compose it, an ultimate value, an expression of themselves in comparison with which everything outside it is external and alien. In the presence of an external menace, even if that menace be the result of their own Commonwealth's aggression, men still tend to sink their differences and rally to the call of the Commonwealth. They may, during the period of external security, have been conducting the most vigorous campaign against their own ruling class; but, with the coming of external danger, they will tend to rally even to that class until the danger is over.

Yet the modern Commonwealth is not, and can hardly be, in normal times at all an isolated thing. Finance and industry, art and science, thought and sentiment are growingly international in character. On continents at least, the boundaries of Commonwealths are inevitably to a great extent artificial and even arbitrary, and they show continually less conformity with modern needs. In times of peace, the continental traveller crosses national boundaries on an express train; but often the only customs which change are those imposed by the Tariff laws.

Coalfields and ironfields show a distressing disregard for the boundaries of Commonwealths; and a man may work in Essen and live in Holland almost as easily as he may live in Battersea and work in Woolwich Arsenal.

This does not mean that nationality, or membership of a particular Commonwealth, ceases to count in men's minds; but it does mean that the organisation of Society for many purposes tends to ignore, or at least to cross, the boundaries of Commonwealths. As the markets of trade and industry and the communications of art and science become international, there arises, not so much a cosmopolitan spirit, as a vast network of international groupings and associations, from The Hague Convention or the Armaments Ring to the periodical international conferences of *savants* or international exhibitions of artists. Such international organisation is indeed nothing new: and the Society of Christendom is still in very many respects less international than it was in the Middle Ages. But, after a period of intense nationalism and isolation of one Commonwealth from another, we are returning to a more international social structure.

It must not be understood that this internationalism is all to the good, or that it necessarily corrects or supplants the individualism of each particular Commonwealth. Too often, its immediate effect is merely to exaggerate the individualism, or to supplement it with new groups even more immediately dangerous to Labour and to the world. For, when

the isolation of a particular State breaks down, it does not follow that it is replaced by a world-solidarity. Often its place is taken by political and economic alliances between Commonwealth and Commonwealth, or between groups of financiers or capitalists in several Commonwealths. Such groups lead to counter-groups, and to the balance of political and economic power in the world and in the world's markets. The Commonwealths live beneath a Damocles' sword of conflict, and the internal situation of each is affected by the constant pressure of a possible external danger. The internal struggle of classes cannot be permanently suspended; but it is always hampered by the external conditions.

It cannot be too strongly insisted that the external policy of the Commonwealth is necessarily the reflection of its internal system. International relations between Commonwealths necessarily and essentially express the policy of the dominant class in each Commonwealth. Injustice or oppression at home means a selfish and domineering foreign policy. The suspension of internal struggles and the rally round the Commonwealth of all classes in time of external danger mean in many cases the support of national wrongdoing.

Yet it is hardly surprising that men do in most cases still rally to the Commonwealth in such times. For, although the class-struggle tends to dominate social groupings in modern industrial Commonwealths, it dominates at most only the organised

parts of the lives of men. In times of crisis it is not to the State in the sense of the machinery of government that men offer their support, it is to the Commonwealth that underlies all forms of government and of voluntary association. The unorganised part of men's lives, which is still by far the greater part, is compact of sentiments, customs and traditions; and these sentiments, customs and traditions attach themselves intimately to the person of the Commonwealth. The class-struggle is suspended, or largely suspended, in times of external strife, not because the State is greater than the Trade Union, but because the individuals in such times transcend the groups through which they ordinarily act.

Loyalty to the Commonwealth on such occasions has usually to find its expression in a very different thing—obedience to the State. For the State, the machinery of political government in the Commonwealth, is the only social organ which even pretends to include everybody. The State takes the advantage of our loyalty to the Commonwealth: it registers, restricts and conscribes us, and claims from us every sacrifice in the Commonwealth's name. Usually, we yield; grumbling more or less, and deprecating more or less gently the more outrageous forms of interference with our personal or group liberty. If, however, a State is or becomes too completely out of touch with the Commonwealth which it professes to represent—if loyalty to the Commonwealth can no longer express itself,

even imperfectly in obedience to the State—if the overthrow of the existing State is the most imperative need of the Commonwealth—then follows revolution.

This is what has happened in Russia. It was impossible for the Russian people to feel that in serving Czardom they were serving Russia. Even if they were fighting against militarism abroad, they were fighting for oppression at home. Their revolution was in essence not internationalist, but nationalist. It was their loyalty to the Russian Commonwealth that principally led them to the overthrow of Czardom.

But mark what followed. No sooner had Czardom been overthrown than the class-struggle was forced again to the front. There was no longer any organ of Commonwealth that could make the smallest claim to speak for Russia; and Russian society at once fell into its natural internal grouping of possessors and dispossessed. Bourgeois Liberals and hardly less bourgeois Socialists struggled hard to keep the national unity in being; but the class-conflict would not be denied. The possessing class were intent above all to save their property, the dispossessed to acquire that economic power upon which alone their freedom could be firmly based.

Finally, for the time at least, the power of the Soviets triumphed, and the second revolution registered its success. At once, the world was confronted with a new situation. In one Commonwealth—and that until recently the most reac-

tionary of all—the working class was in power, and the "rights of property" were overthrown. Every capitalist class in the world saw the menace of this situation. Some of their spokesmen, like M. Pichon, made no bones about the matter, and roundly called the Bolshevik Government "outcasts." In other cases the denunciation was more guarded; but through the whole Capitalist Press of Europe went a running fire of insult and innuendo. It would have been laughable, had it not been tragic, to find sections of the British Press recording with apparent satisfaction defeats of the Finnish "Red Guards" by Finnish "White Guards" largely officered and aided by the Germans.

In short, throughout Eastern Europe at least, the Russian Revolutions turned the war of nations into nothing less than a class-war. It has not come to that in Western Europe yet; but who will be bold enough to say that it may not come to that if the war continues. Beneath the unity of every one of the contending Commonwealths is the smouldering reality of the class-struggle; and, given fuel and wind, this suppressed struggle might easily reach the dimensions of something like war.

A predominantly militaristic Commonwealth such as Germany naturally arouses the dislike and fear of predominantly capitalistic Commonwealths such as France or Great Britain. But a proletarian Commonwealth such as Russia has become is almost equally distasteful to both. The class-grouping which appears in every European Com-

monwealth has always hitherto—except for the wild days of the Paris Commune—been, from our rulers' point of view, the right way up. Capital has been on top, and Labour underneath. Capital has dominated the State and the industrial mechanism of the Commonwealth, while Labour has formed its counter-organisation of resistance and criticism. The reversal of these positions is not what our rulers have bargained for, and they feel that Bolshevism would be even more out of place in the councils of the nations than the aggressive militarism of Prussia.

Indeed, the Bolsheviks themselves feel this hardly less strongly. They regard the Russian Commonwealth which they have made, not as a nation in the comity of nations, but as a standing incitement to world-revolution. If they are called "outcasts," they will probably reply that "casting out" is a game at which two can play.

In nothing is this more marked than in connection with the idea of the "League of Nations." The demand for the establishment of a League of Nations surely at once provokes the question, "What sort of nations?" Sir Edward Carson answers this question by saying that it is unthinkable that the "militaristic" Empire of Germany should enter into such a League: the Bolsheviks would certainly take very little interest in a League consisting of "capitalistic" Governments.

These answers raise two different points. A League of Militarist Nations is hardly conceiv-

able except in the sense of balancing alliances of hostile groups; for it is in the nature of militarism to be in opposition to an external enemy. A League of Capitalistic Nations, on the other hand, is quite conceivable and fully compatible with the best "Norman Angellite" arguments. A cursory reading of that astonishing weekly, *Common Sense*, should be enough to convince even the most sceptical of this fact. The capitalists of the world might quite reasonably convince themselves that war is not a paying proposition, and might unite to share out and exploit the markets of the world. They might also unite to keep the working classes of their various Commonwealths in due subjection. Dominating the various States, they might create a League of Nations which would be fundamentally in the nature of a gigantic World-Trust. In fact, a League of Nations, if it meant simply a League of Capitalist States, would be, from the standpoint of Labour, merely a League of Capital.

With this conception must be sharply contrasted that of a League of Peoples. This is what the Bolshevik internationalists have in mind. Such an idea is clearly a menace alike to capitalistic and to militaristic States. It implies the inversion of power in each Commonwealth, and the dominance of the People.

Throughout the foregoing discussion I have again been consciously simplifying the facts. The States of Europe have not the simple capitalist or militarist characters assigned to them without re-

servation. There are real degrees of capitalism, militarism and democracy in various Commonwealths, and no State has a purely capitalistic or militaristic organisation. Nevertheless, what I have said holds good as a generalisation. The class struggle is a fundamental fact not merely of the internal, but also of the external, relations of the European Commonwealths.

That is to say, there cannot be a real League of Nations unless there is a sufficient homogeneity of internal structure among the nations composing it. The "constitutionalisation" of Germany is essential even to her entry into a League of Capitalist Nations, and the democratisation of the other European countries is essential to their entry into a League of Peoples with Russia. Alternatively, Russia must return to the position which she held for a time after the first Revolution.

The democratisation of the various Commonwealths may be accomplished by various means—in this country, perhaps, by wholly constitutional means. I do not mean to suggest that the means by which the Russians overthrew first Czardom and then Kerenski are at all the means by which the British will escape from a very different régime. I say only that oil and water will not mix, and that substantial uniformity of class-structure is essential to a League of Commonwealths.

If this is so, the social question is the question which above all others demands an answer. The Russian Revolutions have inverted the social struc-

ture: they have left a class of ex-possessors and rulers, now dispossessed and deprived of authority, who are struggling by every means, including civil war, to regain their lost power. Even the militarism of Germany, against which these classes were fighting before the Revolutions, now seems to them a timely ally against the power of the Soviets. The Ukrainian *bourgeoisie* seeks, not only subsidies from France, but also military aid from Germany. M. Pichon himself has told us that thousands of Russians are crying out for a foreign invader to deliver them from their own countrymen. Truly, the spirit of the *émigrés* is not dead.

This is a menacing position for any Commonwealth, most of all for a Commonwealth surrounded by others dominated by the classes which it has dispossessed. It is not good, even if it is sometimes inevitable, that changes in the fabric of Society should be so wrought as to effect such bitterness. Far happier are those Commonwealths, if such there be, which can change their nature and redistribute social functions without the aid of any such upheaval, or the legacy of any such bitterness.

It should be our task, then, not, by denying the fact of the class-struggle or acquiescing in oppression, to drive the workers to force or bitterness of spirit. We must be ready, not merely for social reforms and adjustments of the social mechanism, but for radical changes resulting in a comprehensive redistribution of power in the Commonwealth. We must recognise the organisation of Labour, not

merely as the protective association of an inferior class, but as the repository of an important part of the power and authority of the Commonwealth, destined, in the near future, at least to an equal voice in the supreme control. We must adjust our ideas to a Society without classes, based upon the full recognition of the equal humanity and right of every citizen. And, above all, we must endeavour to play our part in framing these new conditions.

The Commonwealth, of which we are members, is not a piece of social machinery, nor is it dependent upon any piece of social machinery. It would exist in us no less if the whole fabric of political organisation which claims to express it were swept away. It is independent of the State and of every form of governing authority, though it finds in them a partial, if often a misleading, expression. It expresses itself to-day, not only in the machinery of government, but still more in the network of voluntary association which the people have built up for themselves; but it is fundamentally independent even of these voluntary associations also. It is, in fact, our way of living together, and its roots are in the sentiments, ideas and traditions which we have in common.

But there is nothing sacred about this Commonwealth—still less about the organs through which it finds expression. They and it are means to the good life for individual men and women, and by the test of their effect on human happiness and

well-being should they and it be judged. If all is right with the men and women who compose it, it does not matter a rap whether a particular Commonwealth lives or dies. It is true, of course, that our happiness may to some extent depend on the Commonwealth—we may love its traditions and its ways of life. But these are tangible things by which it may be judged. The Commonwealth that consists of men and women living a good life is, so far, worthy of survival: the Commonwealth that does not "deliver the goods" had better be overthrown.

CHAPTER III: THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

IN every large modern Commonwealth the industrial system has compelled the working class to organise. Trade Unionism is the necessary product of the Industrial Revolution, and the Socialist Movement the inevitable answer to the capitalistic organisation of Society. In one sense, the modern Labour Movement is the reaction of the working class against Capitalism; but there is a more fundamental sense in which it is not a reaction, but the fruit of a creative impulse. In the first sense, it is merely defensive and protective: it aims merely at maintaining or improving the workers' standard of life within the existing economic order. But in the more fundamental sense, it is a challenge to the existing order, and at least a suggestion of the order which should take its place.

Let us look more closely at the Labour Movement, with a view to understanding both its strength and its weakness, the springs of its action and the explanation of its submissiveness. Why, let us ask, is it there at all, and why, being there, does it not, by mere force of numbers, dominate the world?

First, we must notice that it is at once national and international. It appears in many Commonwealths, and in each it has its own special characteristics. It transcends the borders of Commonwealths; but in its international groupings it consistently recognises national divisions. But

nationally and internationally it has at least two wings or methods of expression—an industrial or Trade Union wing, and a political wing, usually Socialist in character. It has also in most countries a Co-operative wing, more or less loosely attached to either or both of the others.

The relations between these different wings of the Labour Movement vary from country to country. Sometimes, as in France, there is very little connection between the Socialist Party and the Trade Unions: sometimes, as in Great Britain, the Trade Unions largely form the political party of Labour: sometimes, as in Germany, the Social Democratic Party dominates the Trade Unions: sometimes, as in Belgium, the political, industrial and co-operative wings of the movement are joined inseparably together. Whatever the actual form of organisation adopted, there is usually a fairly close approximation in policy and tactics among the various national movements.

Differences in organisation are in many cases readily explained. In Germany, the autocratic character of the Government has necessarily given the movement a primarily political character. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that this political character has been largely forced upon the movement because Germany is a militaristic, even more than a capitalistic, Commonwealth. In Great Britain, on the other hand, the early development of large-scale industry brought the Trade Unions into being before Labour had become politically

conscious, while the fragile democratic element in British Radicalism also contributed to defer the effective entry of Labour into British politics.

The International Labour Movement, which imperfectly associates together the various national movements, consisted, until 1914, principally of two organisations, the International Socialist Bureau with its occasional Congresses, and the International Federation of Trade Unions. On the industrial side, there were in addition a large number of International Federations confined to particular industries or occupations—miners, textile workers, transport workers, etc.—but neither these organisations nor the main Federation itself possessed any great strength or coherence.

The International Socialist Bureau has been throughout a far more considerable affair, and its vitality, even in the difficult circumstances of the war, has been a source of hope to many even outside the Labour Movement. There are still many in every country to whom "Stockholm" stands, not merely for a wasted opportunity, but also for a still living hope. But, if the events of the war have shown that the International is still alive, they have shown no less clearly that its power of action is very closely circumscribed by the character of the national movements of which it consists. The International takes its colour from the national movements, and it is therefore upon them that our attention must be fixed.

The British Labour Movement is by far the

oldest of the Labour Movements of the modern world. It has behind it considerably more than a century of struggle, and it is more than half a century since it assumed something like its present form. Its history has been written too often for me to recount it here. Let me say only that it had its period of idealism and insurrectionary spirit in the 1830's, its period of conservative and even sometimes reactionary growth in the middle of the century, its emergence into life again under early Socialist influence in the 1880's, its political period in the early years of the present century, and its renewed outbursts of industrial unrest in the years immediately preceding the war.

Every organisation tends with age to become clogged with vested interests and obsolete but ingrained habits. It can only keep itself vigorous if, every now and then, it gets thoroughly well shaken up. A movement may, like that of France, get shaken so often that it never gets really time to settle down; but the British Movement has on the whole been shaken too little and too seldom, and has acquired a certain complacency and intellectual laziness which do not make for an aggressive policy. Trade Unionism has never become exactly fashionable or popular—Heaven forbid that it should—but it has become accepted, and it has shown something of a tendency to accept itself. By that I mean that, instead of striving to alter Society, it has shown a tendency to accept itself as a part of the Society

in which it exists and to accept that Society as its natural environment.

The two things that most puzzle Continental Socialists about the British Labour Movement are its phlegmatic temperament and its seeming imperviousness to ideas. At Labour Conferences in France or Italy, men wave their arms and shout as excitedly as if the end of Capitalism were at hand. At German Conferences, men talk as if the matter under discussion were of the profoundest intellectual and practical importance. A British Labour Conference, on the other hand, seldom seems to be listening to the speeches; and, however important the issue may be, it generally wants to get the matter over and done with in the shortest possible time. Possibly a record was created in this respect by the Special Labour Party Conference of February, 1918, which disposed of the entire new constitution at a single morning sitting.

It is indeed true that the standard of intellectual interest in the British Labour Movement, and especially among the Trade Unions, is extraordinarily low. This does not mean that they do their business inefficiently: indeed, they are for the most part highly efficient within their narrow range. What it does mean is that, having learnt by practice to do the things they are immediately called upon to do, they are not particularly anxious to "take on any more." Sufficient unto the day is the intellectual exertion thereof.

This characteristic of British Labour is extra-

ordinarily baffling to the outside observer, or to the middle-class man or woman who finds a way into the Labour Movement. It leads at first to an undervaluation of the capacity of Labour leaders. They seem so little interested in living problems, which surely touch them nearly, that one wonders vaguely what on earth they are really in the Movement for. Only gradually does one find out the capacity behind the lack of theoretical interest.

The Trade Union Movement, I have said, is the product of the Industrial Revolution. So is the British working class. We have lived longer than any other nations under the conditions of large-scale machine production, and we have felt to the fullest extent their effect upon human character. The factory system has set its seal upon our men and women, and, no matter where they are placed, they will be largely dominated by the ideas and traditions of the factory. They are at once disciplined and insubordinate; but both in their discipline and in their recalcitrance they are to a great extent products of the factory system.

If we are to grasp the character of the Labour Movement, we must first grasp that of the workers who compose it. Let us try to see who they are, and how they are chosen. For, in a very real sense, the Labour Movement is not a mere casual five millions or so of the population, but a body of workers chosen from a much larger number by quite definite methods of selection.

The process of selection begins, as Samuel Butler

would have said, when the child selects its parents. The sort of surroundings into which it is born go far to determine its after-life. But, in order that we may not become involved in a controversy of the "Which came first—the chicken or the egg?" description, we will begin our survey of the process of selection at a rather later period: with the elementary school.

Our civilisation has at least this element of prudence—there is a type of ability for which it is always on the look-out. The economic domination of the few is only possible because the few constantly select from the ranks of the many those who are to hold the lower posts of responsibility and power under the direction of the ruling classes. This selection begins in the elementary school. The children who show signs of a brightness that is likely to have an industrial or administrative use are noted, and an endeavour is made to secure for them a form of continued education. The elementary school is not merely a training ground for the rank and file of the social system: it is also a place of selection for the lesser administrators. Thus, when the great majority of children leave the elementary schools for their first direct personal experience of the wage-system, they have already been lightly picked over, and some of the most promising "material" has been abstracted from them.

Both in the secondary schools and in the workshops this process of selection continues. Of

what happens to those who reach the secondary schools we need not speak here; for we are concerned only with the personnel of the Labour Movement, and for the most part those who get to a secondary school have already been abstracted from it. But what happens in the workshops does not vitally concern our present subject. When the rejects of the schools reach the workshops, the process of selection begins afresh. "Bright" boys, in the sense of boys who seem likely to be of use to Capitalism, are singled out for special opportunities; and usually the acceptance of such special opportunities—for technical training, for instance —means withdrawal from the Labour Movement.

Nor is the process of selection confined to children or adolescents: it follows the working class through their whole lives. Whenever a workman shows qualities which are likely to make him useful to his employers it is ten to one that he will be abstracted from the Labour Movement and made a foreman or supervisor of one kind or another.

This means that the working class in the narrower sense—the workers who have so far formed the personnel of the Labour Movement, are necessarily a residue. They have been picked over again and again, and the "material" of which the ruling classes can make use has been removed.

Even when Labour seeks to counteract the effects of this continual drain upon its resources by providing its own educational facilities for adults of

the working class, it cannot altogether prevent the process from continuing. Ruskin College was meant to train officials and advocates for the Labour Movement: it has too often provided officials for Employment Exchanges and other Departments of national, local or capitalist administration. Indeed, it was largely as a reaction against the tendency, which has now ceased to be marked in the case of Ruskin College, that the Central Labour College originally grew up and found working-class support.*

Of course the process of selection is neither complete nor exhaustive. In the first place, many mistakes are made. The most useful men are passed over, and less useful men are taken. In the second place, the "material" sometimes proves recalcitrant, and men prefer to remain in their class rather than to improve their economic position by leaving it. In the third place, the qualities which Capitalism requires, and for which it selects its men, are by no means coextensive with the good qualities of humanity. There are some good qualities which are of no use, and others which are a positive drawback from the capitalist standpoint, and the men in whom these qualities predominate are for the most part left in the ranks of the manual workers. In the fourth place, the process of selection is applied to women only in a far less degree, though, where it is applied, its operation is often far more sinister than in the case of men.

If this picking over of the working class is here

* See further Chapter IX.

described in terms that seem to apply disapproval, it must none the less be recognised that the process is inevitable. There must be men to occupy the minor administrative and supervisory positions, and, while the division of Society into classes continues, this process almost inevitably takes the form of abstracting men from their class. My purpose in describing it is not to disapprove, but merely to show of what elements the Labour Movement mainly consists.

The residue which Capitalist selection leaves behind is inevitably lacking in many qualities—notably, in driving force and constructive imagination. For these qualities are of use, or can usually be perverted into forms which are of use, to Capitalism. The man who makes a "hustling" manager, highly unpopular with the workers under him, might, in other circumstances, have been a democratic leader: the man who makes a fortune by some imaginative stroke would just as readily have placed his imagination at the service of Labour had he remained a "rank and file" worker. The fates and the social order, however, have willed it otherwise; and he gives up to exploitation what was meant for the service of human freedom.

That is why, in the Labour Movement, the men of initiative and ability are so often of unstable character, and the men of stable character so often of second-rate ability. They are, happy accidents apart, men whose qualities it was not worth the while of Capital to develop in its own interest.

They work side by side with the men whom Capitalist selection has missed by an error which it never ceases to regret and, if it can, to remedy.

Moreover, the men of other classes whom the Labour Movement attracts to itself have not, in the past, been usually of the finest quality. Most men of ability can find, from the point of view of material success, much better openings than are to be found in the Labour Movement. Business offers opportunities for getting things done, and showing immediate results, which appeal strongly to the man of push and go. In politics, the older parties have hitherto been far more easily open, and have offered far wider material opportunities to men of ability than the Labour Party. Those of the middle classes who take up with Labour have tended, therefore, to be either "cranks" or disappointed men. The "cranks" include some who are "cranks" in the finest sense of the word—men and women who are governed by principles and ideas and prepared to make any sacrifice for what they believe to be right; but they include also "cranks" in less fine senses, from monomaniacs to men who are mad not on one point, but on everything. In fact, the middle-class adherents of Labour are sometimes idealists and sometimes highly practical persons; but they seldom possess these much-needed qualities in the combined form of a thoroughly practical idealism.

These are the materials out of which a new world has to be made. Moreover, those who must make

this new world are primarily the manual workers themselves, and they must make it in face of the continual defection from their ranks of many of their most efficient members. Of the relation of the manual workers to other social classes, and to those who leave their ranks by selection and promotion, I shall have much more to say in the next chapter. Here we must persist in our examination of the structure and character of the Labour Movement in so far as it consists of manual and other rank-and-file workers—that is to say, of the rejects of Capitalism.

We must notice at the outset that the Labour Movement by no means consists of those whom Capitalism wholly rejects, but of those whom it merely relegates to rank-and-file functions. It consists mainly of wage-earners in more or less regular employment earning a wage which is at least usually up to the subsistence level. Below it, and almost out of its reach, are the total rejects—the slum-dwellers, casuals, "People of the Abyss." In this horrible welter of poverty and physical and spiritual degradation a point is soon reached at which organisation becomes impossible, and the crudest individualism necessarily recurs. Many persons have written books about our slums to prove that even in the "abyss" faith and charity, if not hope, still survive, and acts of human self-sacrifice are freely done. But our concern here is not with the human self-sacrifice that not even the slums can kill, but with the human sacrifice that the

slums involve. These "people of the abyss" may continue to be "Christians" on a fraction of "a pound a week," but they are for the most part utterly beyond the reach of the organisation which Labour has built up for its protection and self-expression.

The Labour Movement consisted, until a quarter of a century ago, almost entirely of the "better class of wage-earners," the skilled workers among whom it still has its main strength. The years succeeding the Dock Strike of 1889 first proved to be possible what till then Labour leaders, in common with the other sections of the community, had believed to be impossible—the organisation of the less skilled and less permanently employed classes of workers. The movement receded after 1889; but the ground gained then was never wholly lost, and, during the last seven years, there has been another tremendous leap forward in the organisation of "general labour." The General Labour Unions, now combined in a National Federation of General Workers with at least 750,000 members, are now a power to be permanently reckoned with in the councils of Trade Unionism.

But, despite the progress of organisation among the less skilled workers, the main strength of Trade Unionism is still among workers who have a definite trade and a more or less safe expectation of regular employment. This is becoming less true as the advance of machinery encroaches upon the

domain of manual skill; but it is still the case in a broad sense. The Labour Movement still consists mainly of workers who are capable of stable organisation largely because they are to some extent stably employed.

This composition of the Labour Movement has important consequences. Although in their relation to Capitalism the organised workers may properly be described as dispossessed and exploited, they are neither so completely dispossessed nor so thoroughly exploited as the mass below them. Many of them have savings, a little property, perhaps a house of their own; while most of them have a certain vested interest in the skill which they possess, and in the status which they have acquired under the capitalist system. This differentiates them in some measure from the workers below them, both from the less skilled workers and, still more, from the unorganised "People of the Abyss." It creates a division in the ranks of the exploited, and it enables Capitalism to create further divisions.

Here again it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that I am merely describing and not disapproving. As Capitalism becomes more highly developed, it is inevitable that social functions should become more widely differentiated not only on the side of Capital, but also on that of Labour.* A

* It is too soon yet to say whether the growth of machinery will reverse this tendency to such an extent as to undo the differentiation in the ranks of Labour; but I do not think it will. It is likely to involve a redistribution of functions; but this will not abolish the differentiation, but re-cast it in a new form.

newly-developed country may present a crude contrast between undifferentiated Capital and undifferentiated Labour; but a long-developed country inevitably instils vested interests and rights into every stratum of society. We could not, if we so desired, revert to a purely propertyless proletariat; and, in addition, we should be very foolish to desire any such thing.

It is a commonplace that organisation and "class-consciousness" develop more easily among "well-paid" workers in regular employment than in the lower grades of the working class. The reason for this is obvious. The worker in regular employment at the standard rate is usually better educated, and has, in any case, far more opportunity for reflection on his status in the social and economic order. The leaders even of the less skilled organisations are largely recruited from the skilled trades.

It is none the less true that the skilled and established character of British Trade Unionism does tend to impress upon it many conservative characteristics. It has a status, even if a poor one, and it does not want to imperil that status, and risk falling into the abyss beneath it, without good and sufficient reasons. It is conservative—and this is the real point—because it *has* something to conserve. It will only be prepared to risk that something if it sees a real prospect of a better position and a higher status.

In fact, imagination is the only quality that can

shake the Labour Movement out of its conservatism. Imagination, however, is precisely the quality which the present industrial system neither develops nor encourages among the working class. We shall be able to see this most clearly if we turn back to the point from which we set out in this chapter.

The Industrial Revolution was the greatest act of dispossession in history. The story of that dispossession is told, with terrible graphic power, in Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's two great books, *The Village Labourer* and *The Town Labourer*. They show us the enclosures as the dispossession of the villager, the creation of factory industry as the dispossession of the industrial worker. It is admitted that both these processes of dispossession resulted in an enormous increase in productive capacity and in the actual production of wealth; but it is none the less true that they took away from the ordinary worker his property and his share in the common property of the Commonwealth, his independence and his status as a free producer. It is not necessary for this argument that the oppressions of the old régime should be ignored or minimised: they are fully admitted. But it is an undeniable fact that, before the Industrial Revolution, a man's work did ordinarily give him a certain sense of independence and did develop in him qualities of free-will and responsibility, whereas the factory system and the enclosed estates of the rich gave no such sense and fostered no such development.

Those who read the writings of William Cobbett or study the history of the Chartist Movement will not remain long in doubt on this point.

Still more, a reading of the early economists or of the Parliamentary orators of the early nineteenth century will convince even the most sceptical that the Industrial Revolution brought with it a new sense of the dependence of the poor upon the rich. The capitalist, as the giver of the boon of employment, was felt and felt himself to be the saviour of Society: the workers who were not sufficiently "pushful" and "abstinent" to become capitalists were enjoined to be for ever grateful to their beneficent employers, who exploited them only for their own good.

The Commonwealth still suffers under the effects of the Industrial Revolution. For one hundred years and more Labour has occupied, not merely a dependent status, but a status which is deadening to the sense of freedom and responsibility. Under these conditions, can we wonder if Labour is long-suffering and slow to revolt? It has been trained to dependence, and it has had more than a century in which to learn its lesson. Poverty presses upon it, and restricts its opportunities for culture and self-expression. The sense of insecurity compels it to cling even to its dependent status as preferable to the comparative independence of the destitute "bottom dog." Poverty and insecurity combine to restrict its mental outlook to the immediate future, and to preclude it from taking a long

view. Moreover, the industrial system is based upon a discipline that is imposed from without. The worker does not have to give orders or even advice. If he is fit for command or consultation, he is picked out by the capitalist and given a status which removes him from his class, while it leaves him still dependent upon the whim of his employer. He is usually not encouraged to think : he is good enough if he does his job. In fact, he is considered in industry, not as a human being or as a citizen, but solely as a part of the industrial mechanism. And, as custom largely rules us all, in the end he often comes to regard himself in the same light.

Outside his working hours, the position is rather different. Mr. Ivor Brown some years ago contributed to the *New Age* a piece of brilliant social characterisation under the title, "Gilders of the Chains." He pointed out that the amusements provided for the poor are not of a nature to turn their minds away from the system under which they are enslaved, but to gild the chains which they wear. The Press, the theatres and other places of entertainment, cinemas, football matches and even public-houses are not merely under capitalist domination, but share to the full extent the disease of the age. They do not express the sentiments or the relaxations of free men, but for the most part only relieve the *ennui* of the enslaved.

Again, I am not rebuking our theatres or even our journalists or newspaper proprietors. The

amusements of an age inevitably reflect its spirit, and it would be absurd to look for free art or free amusement in a servile Society. The whole damned order of things hangs together: it is the business of all good men to select the points at which it is most vulnerable and open to assault, and upon those points to direct all the forces at their command.

The vulnerable point of the existing order is the industrial system, which is also no doubt its strongest point and its pivot. But we have to consider not so much where the enemy's defence is weak as where we can make our own attack strong. The Labour Movement, whose faults and weaknesses we have so fully recognised in this chapter, can be mobilised against the industrial system with a strength which it cannot equally exercise in any other direction. Upon it therefore our attack ought to be mainly concentrated. The nature of this attack we shall be better able to foreshadow when we have examined more closely into the character of the other elements in the personnel of industry.

CHAPTER IV: THE MIDDLE CLASSES

WE saw, in the last chapter, how the manual-working classes are constantly picked over and carefully sorted by their "betters." We omitted to notice there that they also to a certain extent sort themselves. In certain trades, notably carpentering and shop-keeping and other "domestic" occupations, it is comparatively easy to-day for men to "set up for themselves" with only a very little capital behind them. It is true that the mortality among such self-selected "freedmen" is extraordinarily high, and that many relapse again into the ranks of the employed. But the possibility of such self-selection remains, none the less, one of the chief safety-valves of the capitalist system. We have heard much during the last three years of the "one-man business," and it is necessary, before we go further, to say something of this stratum of modern Society.

The "one-man business" is to industry and commerce what the peasant proprietor is to agriculture—a standing incitement to conservatism. Indeed, in one important respect, this is considerably more true of the "one-man business" than of the peasant proprietor. For the latter has, at least, a certain security, whereas it is of the essence of the former that it is insecure. The proprietor of a "one-man business" is walking the tight-rope with wage-slavery, or, as he grows older, destitution, underneath, and the prospect of security and an established position at the other end if he can

keep his balance. He is mortally afraid of a breath of wind, which may blow him off his rope, and therefore he usually stands for the preservation of the *status quo*. Small businesses of almost every type are in this position. The larger ones have often a greater security; but their security depends upon the preservation of the *status quo*. A drastic change in the social order might better or worsen their position; but the very precariousness in some cases, and the limited security in others, conspire to make them conservative.

These elements form the nucleus of the lower middle class and largely determine its culture and its standards. Mingled with them are the lower grades of those whom Capitalism has selected—selected, in these cases, usually for qualities of "conscientiousness" and "method" rather than for initiative or force of character, but sometimes for these qualities also. Such are foremen, office clerks, and many of the lower grades of supervisors and professionals. Above these again come the tradesmen in a larger way of business, and the clerks, supervisors, and professionals of a slightly higher grade. And then, above them, the upper middle class, dominated by the recognised professionals of industry and commerce, law, medicine, and religion, but plentifully sprinkled also with employers, managers, and traders whose scale of business is not large enough to place them in the ruling class.

All these classes, and especially the higher grades

among them, enjoy, at least in appearance, a freedom considerably superior to that of the wage-earners. They live on their profits or interest or on an upstanding salary instead of a weekly wage. They are, with exceptions, more secure, and even insecurity means for them, as a rule, not the fear of destitution, but the risk of falling into a lower grade. If we omit the small traders they are for the most part better educated than the manual workers, and have wider opportunities for culture, whether or not they make use of them. They are not merely free to think, but have as a rule more leisure for thought—shorter working hours and often less monotony in their daily labour.

This freedom, however, is still largely illusory. The mass of professionals and middle-class persons have in some important respects less freedom of thought than the working classes. The power of Trade Unionism has largely won for the manual workers freedom of political opinion and in its expression. If they are sometimes victimised, they can often resist victimisation by corporate action. The middle classes, on the other hand, are far more defenceless. The foreman or clerk who takes an active part in the Labour Movement is likely soon to find himself out of a job, particularly if he attempts to apply any of his principles to his own works or office. Even the doctor who professes advanced principles too publicly may find his "paying" patients seeking other medical assistance. How many middle-class men does each one of us

know who keep their opinions quiet for the sake of their wives and families?

In fact, the whole of the middle classes, including all the diverse social strata which we have indicated, are the dependents of the capitalist system no less than the manual workers. No doubt, their dependence is less galling, both because their material position is better and because they are given ample rope to disport themselves in directions which are not dangerous. But, in the last resort, the social and economic system denies them freedom just as it denies freedom to Labour in the narrower sense.

The fact is not altered because the majority of the middle classes never feel the chains that bind them. They do not desire to taste the forbidden fruit, and the notice which says that it is forbidden never attracts their attention. They go through life almost unconscious of the existence of other classes, or at most wondering what all the trouble is about.

From this description we must except those who are driven by the very circumstances of their professions to realise the existence of other people. The doctor who really believes in his profession, the teacher who really knows the meaning of education, the minister who has a glimmering of the everyday reality of religion—these see that, even if they are comfortable, there are others who are not, and these join themselves to the ranks of the advocates of change. But these are the few; and, even for these few, the act of intellectual and

spiritual conviction which is required before they can throw in their lot with Labour is a bitter pill and hard to swallow. They see so clearly the "shortcomings" of Labour—shortcomings which we described in the last chapter—and they say to themselves, "Can any good thing come out of the lower classes?" With too little faith for an affirmative, they become "Social Reformers," and relapse into the ranks of the damned. There are, of course, some who are saved.

For the great mass of the upper middle classes the day of salvation is not yet. That their fundamental spiritual interest is with Labour they will hardly be induced to believe while their chains are so finely gilded, their culture so well assured, and their bodies so well fed and clothed. But among a minority of them, the leaven will work, and it may be that the time will come when even the majority will be no longer past conviction. For the moment, however, our concern is rather with certain sections of that heterogeneous mass which is called the lower middle class.

These we may divide roughly into two sections —the direct and the indirect dependents of Capitalism. The indirect dependents are those who are "on their own," as small masters or shopkeepers or peasant farmers or what not: the direct dependents are the "selected" of Capitalism, the foremen, supervisors, confidential clerks, and "employed" professionals. To these should be added, as a distinct sub-class, the employees of the

State Departments and of the local authorities. It is of the two latter groups that we have now to speak.

The growth of a common consciousness among the lower grades of professionals and supervisors has been very marked during the last few years. Deputies, who correspond roughly to foremen, have long been organised in the mining industry. On the railways, the Railway Clerks' Association has been making huge strides in the organisation of stationmasters, chief clerks, and agents, while the National Union of Railwaymen has made a beginning of organising supervisory workers in the operative grades. In the Post Office and in the Civil Service, the supervisory and administrative grades have followed the example of the rank and file by forming associations of their own. Teachers are strongly organised, and have even shown a tendency of late years to adopt a more aggressive policy.

But the most interesting recent developments have come from industry proper. The Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen has enrolled 10,000 members and decided by an overwhelming majority to register as a Trade Union; while the Association of Industrial Chemists is already following closely upon its track. A National Association of Engineering Foremen has recently been started in opposition to the Foremen's Mutual Benefit Society, which is subsidised and controlled by the employers; and the new

body shows signs of a willingness to act in concert with the rank-and-file Trade Unions.

Of course, these developments and others like them are, so far, mere drops in the ocean; but they do at least serve to show that a new spirit is abroad. Much hangs upon their fate and upon the reception accorded to them in the ranks of organised Labour. For, after all, the people who do the work of the world are the manual workers and the managers and professionals—"workers by hand and brain" in the words which, significantly enough, are used both in the first tract of the National Guilds League and in the first manifesto of the reorganised Labour Party. If these two sections of the community can pull together, it must be a very heavy burden that they could not draw.

The widened and reorganised Labour Party is an attempt to find for these two sections a common political platform: the ideas of National Guilds, as we shall see later, are an attempt to find for them a common economic platform. What, then, are the things that hold them apart, and, still more important, what are the things that can be used to bind them together?

The supervisors and professionals, whether in public or in private employment, fall more or less sharply into two classes. They are either experts possessing a special technique and belonging to a defined profession which is, or ought to be, largely self-governing; or they are supervisors or "manipulators of men," whose main business it is to

order and co-ordinate the actions of other men. Of this I have had something to say already, in the first chapter of this book. The supervisors or professionals of the second type no doubt have, and must have, a knowledge and a technique of their own; but these are ancillary to their main function, which is the management of men. Whereas, in the case of the professionals properly so called, technique is primary and the basis of their common function.

Let us look at the relations of these two classes to the manual workers. And let us, for shortness' sake, call them simply "supervisors" and "professionals."

The relation of the manual workers to the foremen or supervisors is at present largely one of mutual suspicion. The supervisor is, and must be under present conditions, the employer's man. He has been picked by the employer, usually out of the ranks of the manual workers: he is paid by the employer, and the employer can dismiss him and perhaps force him back into the ranks. He must, therefore, look after the employer's interests and confront the men in the shop as the representative of the employer.

Yet he is at the same time to some extent a go-between. He holds only non-commissioned rank in the army of industry, and his power is strictly circumscribed. He is often forced into the position not only of carrying to the men the orders of the management, but also of carrying to the

management the views of the men. Himself usually promoted from the ranks of the men, he has some understanding of their point of view, though this understanding itself may sometimes help to make him overbearing and arbitrary after his change of status. He is a go-between who, whatever his personal views may be, is compelled by force of circumstances to side with his employer.

This makes the workers naturally suspicious of him. They see in him, not merely an agent of the management, but also to some extent a renegade from their own class. Although the majority would with little hesitation take a foreman's job if it were offered, they often resent the doing by others of what they would do themselves. They do not find it easy to make full allowances; for toleration is one of the most difficult, as well as one of the finest, of the virtues.

Nevertheless, there are many who see the great importance of a *rapprochement* between the supervisors and the rank-and-file workers, and realise that the best policy for Labour is to encourage, by every means in its power, the development of organisation among the supervisory grades. The supervisor is essential to industry, and, however supervisors were appointed and whomever they served, they would be largely the same people.

The tendency, then, which is already manifesting itself to some extent in the Trade Union movement, for the rank-and-file workers to endea-

vour to keep their promoted members in their organisations after promotion and to establish close relations with any separate associations which the supervisors create for themselves is essentially good. It is possible to hold strongly, as I do, that all supervisors should be chosen by those whom they are to supervise, and in particular that the effort of Trade Unionism should be directed to taking the control of promotion and the choice of foremen out of the hands of employers and vesting it in themselves; and at the same time to hold that, even before that step is taken, there is room for a *rapprochement* between the supervisors and the rank and file. At the present stage, such a *rapprochement* could not extend beyond the lower grades of supervisors; but, even in that restricted area, it would be a great advance, and would pave the way to a change in the methods of appointment. It would also enormously strengthen the hands of the supervisors in relation to the management, and decrease their dependence upon it; and this would set them free to remember their origin, and behave far more humanly and fairly in relation to the rank-and-file workers.

The position of the lower grades of professionals is far simpler than that of foremen. For they are not, except incidentally, in the position of having to order the rank-and-file workers about. Their functions are mainly advisory, and their place in industry, as well as their bond of union one with another, they owe to their technique and know-

ledge. The barrier that holds them apart from the rank-and-file workers is not that they function as their "superior officers," but that they regard themselves as belonging to a superior caste. In fact, they tend to be snobbish, and to look down upon the manual workers as of commoner clay than their own. They are "respectable," and their sense of their own respectability is fostered by their employers. Until quite recently, they have been almost wholly unorganised. A very few had drifted into the National Union of Clerks, a very few more, having served an apprenticeship in the workshops, had remained members of various craft Unions. Even now, with the rise of the Draughtsmen's and Chemists' Associations, only the fringe has been touched by organisation.

Yet even the material interests of the vast majority of these professional workers are essentially the same as those of the manual workers. To begin with, many of them are no better paid, and, in addition, the drawing office or the laboratory is no more free from the vexations and oppressions of Capitalism than the workshop or the yard. Spiritually, their aims are far more closely akin; for the desire for freedom and self-direction exists among both groups, and both are clearly necessary to a democratic and self-governing industrial system. It is only "snobbishness" that holds them apart—the snobbishness of the "black-coated proletariat" fancying itself better than the manual worker, and the inverted snobbishness of

the manual worker who despises the professional for posing as his social superior.

Similar in some respects is the position of the Civil Servant, though he does not come as a rule into close contact with any large body of manual workers. The Civil Service is organised in almost all its grades, and the process of organisation has affected to a considerable extent the higher branches. The newly-formed Association of Civil Servants consists for the most part of persons so tailorly black-coated that they have quite ceased to be in any ordinary sense a proletariat. But these and all other grades of Civil Servants have a considerable quarrel with the present social system; and it is a sign of the times that, in its latest pronouncement on policy, the Civil Service Clerical Alliance puts forward a vigorous demand for increased control over promotions and the organisation of the service—a demand which has long been made by the Postal and Telegraph Clerks' Association and by other Post Office Associations.

The question of "control" forms, indeed, the central point round which any alliance in the economic sphere between manual and "brain" workers must turn. When the demand for control of industry is put forward by the manual workers, as it so often is nowadays, the "brain workers" are inclined to fear that this means a cult of incompetence, an ignoring of capacity and technical knowledge, and the enthronement of inefficiency. If it meant any such things, it would indeed be

doomed from the outset; but what it really means is that the industries and services should be controlled by those who do the work and the service in them, that is to say, by manual workers and "brain workers" together. Doubtless, as we saw, it also involves that those whose main business is the supervision of others should be chosen by those whom they are to supervise; but there is nothing in this demand that should make blench the expert whose main function is not to order other people about, but to apply his technical knowledge and ability to the problems of industry.

Of course, those who believe that men respond only to blows and move only as they are driven will not be brought by any words of mine into an alliance with the Labour Movement. But those who believe that the real leader of men should hold his position, not by force or superior economic power or superior social status, but by force of character and by personality, will not be afraid to enter such an alliance. Nothing less is at issue than the whole question of the nature of leadership, and of the position which the leader ought to hold in the industrial system. If aristocracy is a thing of social caste and status, I am against aristocracy in industry just as much as I am against it in politics and in Society. If, on the other hand, aristocracy means merely what it says, the leadership of the best men, then I hold that it is most likely to be realised in the Commonwealth that is most democratic, not only in its political structure, but also in

its industrial system. The true leader is he who leads not by authority, but by influence, he who gains and holds his position by virtue of his personal character and ability. Men who believe that they are leaders by nature need not fear that a democratic system will give them no scope: if they are right about themselves, they will be far more likely to find themselves overloaded with too much power.

The expert, the professional, and the administrator are vital to Labour because they possess special qualifications which are essential to industry and to the Commonwealth. And, equally, Labour is essential to them if they are to possess any real independence or to secure a reasonable chance of doing their jobs well. Under present conditions, they are the dependents of Capitalism, and they have to do their jobs not so as to render the best possible service, but so as to afford the greatest possible profit for their employers. They are constantly compelled to do bad work, because it pays their lords and masters best that bad work should be done. Of course, this burden of capitalist morality does not fall upon all alike: there are good and bad employers, and there are employers who make good and efficient service a profitable business. But there are few brain-workers attached to industry who have not, at some time during their lives, been confronted with the necessity of doing bad work in order to live and keep their jobs.

I do not, of course, claim that the brain-worker

has only to be willing to ally himself with Labour, and Paradise will come. The situation is not so sweetly simple. But I do firmly believe that only in alliance with manual Labour will the brain-worker find freedom and professional self-government. I think the mere pressure of circumstances, the growth of capitalist organisation on the one side and of Trade Union organisation on the other, will in the long run drive many of the supervisory and professional grades willy nilly into an alliance with the manual workers, and it is not difficult to see this process already at work. But I do not want the "brain-workers" to be *driven* into this alliance: I want them to come into it of their own accord. And I want the manual workers, if need be, to go more than half-way to meet them.

One of the main reasons why the new Labour Party constitution is to be welcomed is that it makes a bridge for co-operation in the political sphere. A similar bridge in the industrial sphere may take far longer to build; but, if it can be built, the effects are likely to be much more far-reaching. For the struggle for a co-operative control over industry would bind the workers by hand and brain together far more securely than a purely political union. It is out of co-operation in the daily struggle that the truest comradeship grows.

I may seem, in this chapter, to be giving a very wide and elastic interpretation to the term "middle classes." That is because I have been interpreting the term not so much in a social as in an economic

sense. I have been thinking of those who stand between the "captains of industry" on the one side, and the "rank and file" on the other. But before leaving the "middle classes" altogether, I must say a little more about them in their social aspect.

It has often been remarked that the theories of the world are largely made by the "middle class." Hobbes and Marx were alike of the middle class; but neither of them addressed his theory primarily to his own class. Hobbes did not say that the Social Contract implied the sovereignty of the *bourgeoisie:* he gave his Leviathan the head of Charles I. Still less did Marx salute the suburbs and say, "*Bourgeois* of the world, unite: you have nothing to lose but your villas, and a world to win": he fixed his eyes firmly upon Labour, and bade his own class go hang. In fact, although the *bourgeoisie* produces most of the theorists, it is very seldom the theme of their theories. Nor is this surprising; for the *bourgeoisie* is in fact not so much a class as a transition, not so much a thing as a relation. If we seek to define it, we are hard put to it to find a definition that is not merely a differentiation from other classes: unless, indeed, we damn it with a word, and call it "comfortable."

But the mere fact that the middle class, under analysis, proves not to be a class at all, only makes its members and the groups which compose it, all the more important. What is really to be desired is that those individuals and groups which are really doing much of the best and most useful work

of the world should ally themselves with, and indeed become a part of, organised Labour. Many of them possess the education which is to-day Labour's principal lack. They could do fine and much-needed work for Society within the Labour Movement, and, by a timely alliance, they would be taking in advance and on far better terms a step which will in the end be forced upon them by the mere logic of events, if they have not the courage to take it sooner for themselves.

CHAPTER V: THE RULING CLASSES

WE have attempted, in the last two chapters, to analyse the composition and character of the two classes or economic groups which between them do most of the world's work. It remains to ask and to answer a further, and a fascinating, series of questions.

Who and what are our rulers? Why do they rule over us? By what "right," divine, spiritual, intellectual, or physical, have they this authority? How came they to be where and what they are?

Viewed in almost any light, they have elements of humour, and, when we look at them in the cold light of reason, it seems passing strange that so much authority should be concentrated in their hands. They include the competent and the incompetent; the wicked and the virtuous; the "nobility" and "gentry" as well as the very latest things in "self-made men." They often dislike one another very much; and there are among them wide differences of social theory and outlook. But on one fundamental point the vast majority of them are agreed. They stand for the "rights of property" and the maintenance of the capitalist system.

Before we can proceed to our analysis, there are one or two misconceptions which have to be cleared away. Just as, in speaking of the middle classes, I had in mind primarily not a social but an economic grouping, so I shall be thinking mainly in terms of economic status and function in this

chapter also. It is not so much of "Norman blood" that I want to speak, as of the less pure liquid which flows through the veins of our great business men. That is to say, the "gentleman" and the Cecil are largely irrelevant to the present argument. They are interesting survivals; but they are not, in any real sense, the ruling classes of to-day.

The earlier democratic thinkers used to direct their attacks very largely upon the Idle Rich Class. They called the world's attention very rightly to the monstrous injustice of a system which allowed to a particular social class huge wealth and prestige in return for doing absolutely nothing. In the days before "Reform," the rising class of manufacturers very naturally joined in this assault, and proclaimed that their active share in the world's work gave them a right to a share in the world's power. They therefore appeared as Liberals in the eyes of men, and even to some extent made common cause with the proletariat which they exploited in an assault upon the decaying battlements of feudal oligarchy. Partly by the power of their proletarian allies, they won their battle; but, instead of displacing the feudal class, they began thereupon a process of fusion with it which is still going on. They shared its power and authority, gradually claiming a larger and larger share for themselves: they intermarried with it, and began to ape its social customs and assume a proprietary interest in its traditions; and they combined with

it to exclude the mass of the people from any real power.

This fusion has never been complete; and, inside the defensive alliance of feudalism and capitalism, the old dissensions still persist. The true Tory still scorns the powerful *parvenu:* Mr. Balfour probably regards Lord Northcliffe with an acute, if finicking, distaste. But, for the defence of "the system," Mr. Balfour and Lord Northcliffe will willingly dance together, and, what is more, Mr. Balfour will willingly let Lord Northcliffe set a tune which must be revolting to his light, fantastic toe.

It is true that Liberalism has maintained, and maintains to this day, a left wing which has a certain Radical bias. But this left wing has had hardly more power in the affairs of Liberalism than the Tory Democratic wing has had in those of the Unionist Party. The two great parties stand equally for the Capitalist system; and he who seeks to disentangle their real points of difference has a difficult task.

We can best compare the two "great" parties if we first attempt to analyse each one separately.

The Unionist Party consists to-day primarily of three groups, of which one holds most of the power. The first group is the remnant of true Toryism, and is best exemplified by what is often known as the "Cecil clan." It believes in the State; but it believes also in the individual: it has traditions and habits of fair dealing which, however, are apt to stop short at the borders of its own

class: it has a profound and abiding faith in authority, and this faith sometimes brings it into strange company, because it enables it to see through the shams of current political "democracy." It is, however, only an historical survival, owing what little power it still possesses to its past prestige and to the personal character of its adherents.

Next comes the powerful element in the Party—the business Imperialists. These were for a time Tariff Reformers by expediency; but Tariff Reform was only an isolated expression of their attitude, and not its fundamental basis. They are predominantly world-exploiters, men whose internal and external policy alike are directed by the interests of "big business." They are industrialists rather than financiers, and their noses are for ever asniff for new markets. Their domestic attitude is dictated by the desire for cheap labour-power, by which some of them mean low wages, and the more astute increased output and greater efficiency in a capitalist sense.

Third come the militarists and apostles of Macht. They shade into the business Imperialists by imperceptible gradations; but they are essentially different. They want business success and world-exploitation; but they want these things as a means to Empire and world-domination. They would paint the map red merely from a natural love of red paint, for which blood affords almost a superior substitute in their eyes. The business Imperialists want Empire because "trade follows the

flag"; the Militarists want trade because the flag so persistently follows it.

Let us now apply the same method to the Liberal Party. This is, in some respects, less easy to analyse, especially as it is now largely breaking up. We must therefore confine our first analysis to Liberalism as it was before the war.

The Liberal Party before the war presented the paradoxical spectacle of a party with profoundly individualistic traditions busily engaged upon a programme of bureaucratic Collectivist legislation. The seeds of its war-time disruption were already beginning to sprout before the war. But the essence of the Liberal programme before the war was a combination of Individualism for the rich with Collectivism for the poor. By this combination of contradictory doctrines it sought to reconcile the heterogeneous elements among its supporters.

Of the big groups upon which the Liberal Party was based two stand out as of predominant importance. The first of these is the huge capitalist and financial interest which still clung to a *laissez-faire* policy in matters of trade, and preferred a free opportunity to sell its commodities, hire out its shipping, and lend its money in any quarter of the globe, irrespective of political considerations, to a systematic policy of imperial development. Shipping, cotton, and finance were the basis on which this group rested, and the importance of these industries is the measure of its economic and political power.

The second group was not economic, but social and religious. It included the bulk of Nonconformity, and was largely middle class in composition, though it was led by rich Nonconformists of the governing classes, and had its mouthpiece in Mr. Lloyd George. The desire of this group for a policy directed against the "privileged" classes and the Establishment and for measures of "moderate social reform" was reconciled in Mr. Lloyd George's social policy with the desire of the Liberal industrialists and financiers for the maintenance of capitalist individualism. The policy was, as I have said, Individualism for the rich and Collectivism for the poor.

More and more distinct from these two groups as the social policy of Liberalism has expanded and appeared in its true colours has been the small Radical wing of the Liberal Party, which has now for some time been in a state of almost open revolt. But this group neither has any considerable influence inside the party, nor is capable of forming a party of its own. For it rests primarily upon a negation. It denies the policy of Bismarckian intervention which Mr. Lloyd George pursued during his years of virtual leadership; but it has no constructive alternative of its own. Of what it would do if it had the power it gives, as a group, no hint. Mr. Wedgwood and Mr. Outhwaite have certainly a constructive platform, if a narrow one, of their own; but the Radical group as a whole is almost confined, by its personnel and its point of

view, to an opposition which is ineffective because it is not constructive.

The complaint will, no doubt, be made that it is difficult, if not impossible, to fit into this analysis of the two capitalist parties some of their principal parliamentary leaders. That, however, is not really an argument against the analysis; for I am analysing not so much the politicians themselves as the forces behind them, by which in the last resort their actual policy is dictated. The politician may sometimes have a personality of his own, and even make his own speeches; but, when it comes to acting, his policy on important issues is usually dictated, not by his personal preferences, but by the forces on which his party depends for its support. He may, of course, make a policy of his own; but his power to make such a policy the policy of his party will depend upon the support accorded to it by the "interests." Far more often, he does not make his own policy, but merely pieces it together out of the various claims of the interests on which he depends. That is to say, most of our leading parliamentarians are not statesmen, but politicians.

I have dwelt so long upon the capitalist parties, not because they are the ruling classes, but in order to emphasise their essential dependence upon the ruling classes. We are often asked in these days to bemoan the decay of the power and prestige of Parliament, and the passing of more and more power into the hands of the administration. I am not prepared without further analysis of the situa-

tion to join the ranks of those that mourn, or to be comforted if the power and prestige of Parliament can be restored. For, in the main, the passing of power from Parliament to the administration is merely an inevitable result of the real distribution of power in the community.

The growing organisation, coherence, and common consciousness of economic forces outside Parliament has necessarily produced its effects upon the legislative and administrative machine. When capitalist forces are strongly organised, it is more convenient and easier from their point of view to negotiate with the Government and the administrative machine than to argue their case in Parliament. When, therefore, they want legislation in their own interest, or when legislation which affects their interest is introduced, it suits them best to press their case by direct negotiation with the Government. Before the Bill in question is introduced, or at least before there is any real prospect of its passage, the Government meets the various interests concerned, and endeavours, by judicious concessions and compromises, to secure a Bill which satisfies these interests. If such a Bill is secured, the debates in Parliament become largely a formality, and the Government Whips see to it that the measure is passed without substantial amendment.

I have spoken of capitalist interests; but this method is, of course, necessarily employed by Labour as well as Capital. The great Trade Unions

are often consulted as well as the great employers: the only difference is that the capitalists are better at the game and that their economic power is the greater.

So much for the facts of present-day economic legislation: now for the commentary upon them. Those who seek a way out of this bargaining by the restoration of the sovereignty of Parliament are knocking their heads against a brick wall. For Parliament is no less in the hands of the great interests than the Government itself: it is merely a less convenient instrument for the normal use of these interests in matters of legislation. If a real attempt were made to restore its sovereignty, Parliament, at the bidding of the interests, would be the first body to object. Economic power dominates both Parliament and the Government; and economic power will therefore be the factor which will decide which of the two is to be the normal instrument of economic legislation.

In fact, although apparently the power of the Government is constantly being increased at the expense of Parliament, only a very superficial observer can be satisfied with this analysis of the situation. What is really happening is that the ruling classes, instead of ruling through the cumbrous and too public machinery of a Parliament which, in the last resort, they control, are more and more ruling directly, by giving their orders immediately to the administration. Such a development is inevitable with the growth of economic organisa-

tion. The strongest forces in this country to-day are not Parliament and the politicians, but the organisations representing industrial and commercial Capital. And, a long way behind them no doubt, the next strongest forces are the organisations representing Labour.

The secret, therefore, of the decay of Parliament and of politics lies not in the wickedness of politicians, or even of Governments, but in the dominance of organised economic forces. That is why "Clean Government Leagues" and the like are so manifestly and entirely useless. A capitalist Society is inevitably dominated by economic considerations; and those who denounce the futility and the corruption of politics would do well to realise that the only way of making them better is by breaking the organised economic power of the capitalist class.

Before we leave the subject of politics, there is one further question which we must ask and answer. *If* Labour conquered political power, could it, by virtue of its political power, effect any fundamental change in the economic system? The answer is twofold. In the first place, even if Labour did climb to power at a General Election, it would find itself, at the present stage of its economic power, impotent to make any real change. In the second place, even if Labour could win one General Election, it could not for long hold its semblance of political power unless it had greatly increased its economic power. In the Common-

wealth to-day, power in the economic field is the key which alone can unlock the gates of real political power.

This is, of course, no argument against political action by the Labour Movement: it is rather an explanation of the disappointments caused in the past, and still doomed to be caused, by political action. Labour's effectiveness in the sphere of politics will increase in proportion as it improves its organisation, and increases its actual power, in the economic sphere. Political action may even minister to such an increase; but it cannot effect any real change unless it has behind it a sufficient backing of economic power.

We may now turn away from political phantoms to economic realities. We have seen that the ruling class is not to be found in the political sphere, except in the sense in which a face may be seen in a mirror or a photograph. Politics is the reflection of economics; but this fact is not necessarily a reflection upon the politicians, who cannot help themselves. They are the servants of the ruling classes, at which we must now take a peep.

I spoke, almost at the beginning of this chapter, of the Idle Rich Class. I have surely by this time said enough to show that the real danger lies, not in the Idle Rich, but in the Busy Rich Class. Our ruling class does not luxuriate idly upon the sweat of the workers' brows; it gets, for the most part, exceedingly busy in its own interest. Of whom, we must ask, does this Busy Rich Class consist?

In the first place, we must, of course, not identify it simply with the shareholding public. Shareholders are drawn from every class in the Commonwealth, with the exception of the "bottom dogs." They may on occasion constitute a "propertied interest," but they are not in any sense a "class." It is true that they are often used as a rampart behind which the ruling classes may shelter themselves; and that legislation which has even to the smallest extent a confiscatory character is habitually denounced as an attack upon the tiny incomes of the widowed and the fatherless. But it is perfectly plain, even to those who use these arguments, that the share-holding public does not constitute a class, although it may, by judicious manipulation, be made to serve a very useful purpose in the maintenance of class privilege. A "stake in the country" does usually make a "stick-in-the-mud"; and the more widely a small share in invested wealth can be dispersed among the various classes, the greater is likely to be the security of the large holdings of the rich.

In the second place, the ruling class is no longer an aristocracy of blood. It has to some extent married blood, and taken up a good deal of the hereditary aristocracy into itself. But it is not even in the main hereditary, despite the inheritance of huge wealth. It remakes itself largely in each new generation by means of what may be suitably described as *la carrière ouverte aux talons*, or the door that is open to those who push. Each

generation of "self-made men" leaves indeed a sediment of degenerate, or sometimes regenerate, sons and daughters behind it, and many of these tend to lapse from the Busy Rich into the Idle Rich Class. But in each generation the men who actually hold most of the economic power are largely "self-made." I do not mean by this that it is easy for a man to rise from the Working Class into the Ruling Class. That is very seldom done in a generation, though it is often done in two or three. What I do mean is that the Ruling Class is mainly recruited, by capitalistic selection, from the various strata of the Middle Class.

Our analysis must therefore look not so much to origin or to property qualification as to economic function. The Ruling Class is the class which runs the industrial, commercial, and financial system, and, as we saw, indirectly runs politics also. It consists in part of very wealthy men; but it includes also many men who have the handling of great wealth without necessarily possessing it. That is to say, it embraces not only our great capitalists and financial magnates, but also their salaried managers and captains of industry.

It is, of course, a commonplace that the development of capitalism and the growth of joint-stock enterprise have more and more divorced the ultimate ownership from the actual control and management of industry. This, however, does not mean that the very rich are as a rule content to lend their money to others and to live in leisure on the

interest: it means that the very rich concentrate more and more upon the financial operations which lie at the heart of the economic system, and leave the direction of industrial affairs largely in the hands of salaried managers. These managers have, of course, often a direct financial interest in the businesses which they administer; but their financial interest would as a rule not be enough by itself to place them in the ranks of the Ruling Class. They owe their position primarily to function rather than to property, although they derive it ultimately from the money-power of the great capitalist magnates.

The managers of the great joint-stock enterprises shade off imperceptibly into the managers of smaller enterprises, which do not raise their managers to the status of the Ruling Class. In exactly the same way, there is a continuous series from the great capitalist financiers to the smaller fry of finance and to the middle-sized and small employers who are to be ranked among the Middle Classes. It is nowhere possible to draw a hard-and-fast line; but it is safe to say that the real power and directive authority in the economic sphere are constantly becoming concentrated in fewer hands. This does not mean that the smaller businesses or employers are being eliminated; but it does mean that, over whole industries, and even over the whole realm of finance, there is going on a process of concentration of power which leaves the smaller businesses in existence, and often with increased

prosperity, while it divorces them from the supreme control of major economic operations.

It is now time to say something of the progress made in the organisation of Capitalism during the last few years. It has been hinted more than once already that the war has given a tremendous impetus to the movement for capitalist combination; but we can no longer be content with hints on so vital a point. In all the principal industries in which Trade Unionism is strong, employers have long been combined for dealing with Labour, whether by way of negotiation or by way of a concerted refusal to negotiate. In many industries there have also been combinations of capitalists directed, not to dealing with Labour, but to concerted measures for the maintenance of prices, restriction of output, regulation and promotion of trade, and many other business purposes. Both these forms of combination have been greatly strengthened by the war, and the Government is every day doing its best to stimulate them further. It is the declared policy of the Government to foster combination among hitherto competing traders and employers; and this policy it has pursued with considerable vigour and success. To some extent it has been compelled to act in this manner by the imperative needs of the war; for it is far easier, and produces more efficient results, to deal with combined than with competing employers. But, whatever may have been the motives for the policy pursued by the Government, there

can be no doubt about its future effects. War-time combinations among employers will not fall asunder when the war is over: they will be more likely to acquire additional strength and vitality. Indeed, many of the most ambitious attempts at combination at the present time are directed, not to war-time needs, but to after-war possibilities.

The most significant instance among these recent developments is the Federation of British Industries, which is imposing enough in its aims and promises, even if there has been as yet comparatively scant opportunity for their fulfilment. The founders of the Federation of British Industries set out to make an effective organisation which should speak with the voice, not of this or that particular industry, but of British industries as a whole. This ambitious project has not, indeed, as yet been completely successful: many employers and certain whole industries still remain outside the Federation; but despite these limitations, Mr. Dudley Docker and his friends have made the first real attempt to form an effective combination of all capitalist industrial interests for purposes of defence and aggression.

The Federation of British Industries is, no doubt, more important as a symbol than as an actual power. The growing concentration of policy and authority in each particular industry adds more strength to the structure of Capitalism than even the most successful attempts at universal combination. The growth of employers' associations for

negotiation with Labour and their more and more intimate connection with price-fixing and output-regulating associations have enormously strengthened Capital in its control both of Labour and of the State. It is true that Labour too has strengthened its organisation; but there can be little doubt that the growth is far more considerable and permanent on the side of Capital. After the war, the State will be more than ever the handmaid of capitalist economics, and Labour will have to struggle hard if it is not to be more than ever the capitalists' slave.

We must beware lest we undervalue the Ruling Class. "Fat Men" most inadequately describes them. Many have rather the "lean and hungry look" of those who devour power as fast as they can accumulate it, and are always ready for more. They are not the bloated, flabby, misshapen beings Will Dyson loves to portray. It is, indeed, unfortunate for Labour that they are not; for a very few blows would suffice to put out of action once and for all such caricatures of humanity.

It is true, indeed, that "Fat Men" and "Fat Women," the spiritually and physically flabby of this world, draw much of the wealth which the Ruling Class keeps for them from the hands of the people. Dyson's cartoons are largely true of the Idle Rich, in soul if not in the flesh; and they are still more true of the lesser capitalists of the Middle Class. There are even many of our most powerful financiers who have no real capacity, but owe their

dominant position solely to their wealth. But none of these are the real sustainers of the fabric of capitalist Society. It is of the Lean Men rather than of the Fat Men of Capitalism that Labour has to beware.

These Lean Men's strength comes from the fact that they believe in the system which they administer. They are often not the men of huge wealth, but the recruits which Capitalism has picked out for itself from among the classes below. They are men whose capacities are peculiarly suited to the task of industrial or financial management, perhaps under any conditions, but certainly under the conditions of capitalist production. They possess initiative, force of character, and, above all, belief in themselves. It seems to them natural and inevitable that a few should be masters and the many servants, and that they should be of the few and their subordinates of the many. They believe in an economic oligarchy dominated by themselves, and their imagination is attracted by the colossal achievements of Capitalism in a material sense without being repelled by the sufferings which that achievement has cost. They are "blond beasts" and supermen of industry; and, on the whole, they do their job well and efficiently.

This does not mean, as we shall see in the next chapter, that the industrial system of to-day is an efficient system: it means only that, within the system, these rulers of men on the whole succeed in doing what they set out to do. That is, they

succeed in keeping themselves on top and the many underneath; in preserving the lion's share of the fruits of industry for a few, and in maintaining the class-structure of Society. It is not, I think, the monetary reward of their work that primarily attracts these " supermen " : it is the possession of power. For they have a philosophy of their own and a theory of social organisation which are different from the philosophy which animates this book and from the democratic theory. They are oligarchs by conviction just as others are democrats by conviction.

Whether, in the democratic Commonwealth of the future, these roaring lions will lie down with democracy depends mainly on democracy not being too much of a lamb. If democracy meant what they think it means, the cult of incompetence and the enthronement of mediocrity, then there would indeed be no hope of a reconciliation. But it is my conviction that a democratic Commonwealth would in fact afford full scope for its supermen, not by the extravagant rewards and the huge power which it confers on them to-day, but by influence fully proportionate to their competence.

Men of action are not usually theorists except in a secondary sense: that is to say, they take their theories from their experience of action. The " superman " of to-day finds himself in an environment which makes him almost inevitably an oligarch by theory; but the " superman " who grew up in an established democratic environment might

well be a democrat as the result of experience of democracy in action. He might well, if he were a real "superman," prefer leading a democracy to ruling a servile class.

The established "superman" is not open to conviction, and there can be little reasonable doubt that democracy will have to crush him on its road to power. But the supermen of new generations are another story. The Ruling Class of to-day must be dethroned to give place, not to a crowned mediocrity, but to a Commonwealth based on a democratic leadership of ability.

CHAPTER VI: THE INDUSTRIAL SYSTEM

THE lords of industry are much given to complaining of the low quality of those whom they are compelled to employ. "There is plenty of room," they tell us, "at the top"; and they would be quite willing to admit to the camaraderie of the governing class any man who really possesses the qualities which are necessary to a Captain of Industry. They are always looking, they explain, for talent and they are always ready to recognise it by promotion and by the granting of responsibility; but it is all too seldom that they find it. The mass of the workers, they lament, neither take that pride in their work nor feel that sense of loyalty to the firm which employs them which the governing class is sure that it has the right to expect.

There is no doubt an element of truth in the complaints which our rulers make of the lack of ability and initiative among those whom they rule. How could it be otherwise? The whole system under which industry is carried on to-day is one which tends to destroy or stultify these qualities in the great mass of men and women. The ruling class is, indeed, always on the look-out for "good" men; but to a great extent it sucks the goodness out of men before it has a chance of finding them to be good, even from its own limited point of view. We shall see this more clearly if we look rather closely at the present structure of the industrial system, and try to estimate its worth in terms

of the human qualities which it tends to call out.

"A garden," wrote T. E. Brown, "is a lovesome thing, God wot." No one would say that of a factory. The average factory is still a place in which no sane man would elect to spend even the smallest part of his day. In many cases it is draughty, inconvenient, ill-heated, ill-lighted, devoid of human comfort, and often monstrously inefficient for the actual business of production. In other cases it may have all the finest hygienic qualities. It may be well-lighted, well-heated, equipped with the latest sanitary appliances, well-ventilated, and efficient from an industrial point of view; but, even if it is all these things, it is still, as a rule, an inhuman place in which no man would elect to spend the best part of his life. For it is a place in which one social caste gives orders to another, or rather passes on its orders to another through a whole hierarchy of subordinates whom it retains and pays in its own interest. It may be said that in many of these respects the factory resembles the Army. In the Army, too, there are classes clearly distinct in function and in status, and there is the hierarchy of Lance-corporals, Corporals, Sergeants, Sergeant-majors, and the rest through whom orders are transmitted to the humble rank and file. But the Army is none the less essentially different from a factory, because it is to some extent animated by a common idea, and because at least no one in it feels that he is being exploited by another social class for its own personal profit. I

am not upholding in the least the present Army system. I believe its discipline and its arbitrary division of social classes to be pernicious; but the factory is in many respects worse than the Army because it is not only dominated by the same false social ideas of class superiority, but is also monstrously inefficient from any human point of view. In the first chapter of this book I criticised with some vigour the habit, not only of the economist but also of the ordinary man of the upper and middle classes, of regarding Labour as something inhuman, as a mere material of industry to be used to the greatest economic advantage irrespective of human considerations. This tendency finds its full expression in the organisation of our factories and workshops. The discipline that is in them is arbitrarily imposed from above; the Managing Director is supposed to keep the Works Manager up to scratch; the Works Manager is supposed to do the same to the various Departmental Superintendents; the Departmental Superintendents pass the process on to the Foremen; and the Foremen, whether directly or through the Charge Hands, bully the men into carrying out the orders of the Management. In the normal course of things initiative is not expected of the rank-and-file worker; he is there to do what he is told, to take orders and to execute those orders in ways prescribed by his economic superiors.

This position is not changed even when the management professes to be anxious to call out the

initiative of its workers, and offers inducements to greater output, or even incentives to inventive capacity. For these things do not alter the normal routine of the workshop or the established division of social function and of status inside it. As long as the ultimate authority is vested in a self-appointed management, or in any way in persons who draw their authority from a power which is external to the workers employed, the system will remain a servile system, and will continue to call out, not qualities of initiative, but qualities of subservience and automatism. Only by a complete reversal of the whole idea and method of factory organisation can a real change be brought about in the attitude, as well as in the status, of the ordinary producer.

When, therefore, the governing classes in industry protest at the scarcity of good men they are protesting at the inevitable result of the system which they seek to uphold. Workshop routine under present conditions is a deadening thing. It does not encourage men to think for themselves or to develop qualities of leadership or of individual initiative. It encourages them merely to get through the daily task in the easiest possible way, and to reserve such humanity as they possess entirely for their hours of leisure. Worse than this; it tends so to crush their individuality that, although they expend little or none of it in the factory, they have only the most meagre supply for their times of leisure.

This is, of course, only true as a generalisation; but I am speaking not of exceptions but of the general rule. The exceptional man always rises superior to circumstances, not merely because he is not influenced by them, but because his head is "bloody but unbowed." A few men will preserve their individuality and initiative under any system of industrial or social organisation that can be devised. Put them in a stone-breaking gang at Portland or in the offices of a flourishing Insurance Company, and they will remain individuals with surplus vitality to set the Thames on fire. But such men are, in any case, exceptions, and it is upon the sort of life that the ordinary man lives that his character and the character of the Commonwealth mainly depend. When our rulers complain of the dearth of good men they are complaining not so much of the lack of supermen as of a low average rate of ability and initiative. We must, then, if we are to value the economic system at its true worth, look mainly at its effect on the ordinary man.

If we do this, our generalisation holds good and more than good. The ordinary man, under the present economic system, simply does not get a chance. His individuality and initiative are not of a kind that will burst the bonds of circumstance; they need to be called forth, stimulated by circumstances, and given every chance to develop. Instead of doing that, we allow them to be stunted and repressed, and either killed altogether or driven very often into unprofitable channels. The

"gambling instinct," as we sometimes call it, is simply a perversion of man's natural vitality that might go into the creation of the good things of life into unprofitable channels, by an economic system which has, broadly speaking, no use for humanity.

Moreover, the tendency of modern industrial organisation is largely to exaggerate exactly these defects of the wage system. There is developing and growing in consciousness, as we saw in our first Chapter, a new profession—the profession of management. The manager is acquiring a technique and a science of his own, but he is using this technique and science for the most part, not in order to stimulate the humanity which is employed in industry, but to subdue it still more to his idea of scientific efficiency. The theory and the practice of Scientific Management—which might under right conditions have brought much lightening of life to the mass of the people—tend, as they are now applied, merely to add to the burden of the present industrial system a further intolerable and inhuman monotony. The Scientific Manager and the Efficiency Expert may be doubling their own individualities and finding wider scope for the use of their own technical knowledge, but under present conditions they usually do this at the expense of the mass of the people and at a sacrifice of real human values.

The workshop of to-day is essentially an inhuman place. This inhumanity is often justified

on the ground that it is inevitable in the sense that there is no possible alternative to it. "We should love," say our rulers, "to make our factories into little Paradises Regained,* but we must remember that this world is essentially a Paradise Lost, and that 'in the sweat of man's brow must man eat bread.'" That is to say, the rulers of industry often know their system to be disgusting and oppressive, but they fall back upon the argument that, after all, their justification is to be found in the Book of Genesis.

Do we or do we not believe these things? Do we believe that industry, which is agreed to be vital to man's life, must necessarily be inhuman and devoid of all spiritual values? Do we believe that men's work must necessarily crush the humanity out of them, and leave them broken or at least bent out of all likeness to real human beings? Before we accept so pessimistic a conclusion we should surely be prepared to consider with all good will any suggested alternative.

Upholders of the existing system are very fond of arguing from efficiency. They say that, with all its faults, the present system does succeed in "turning out the goods," that it has made possible an enormous increase in the creation of material wealth, and an enormously higher standard of life for the world as a whole. But let them beware of using this argument too freely. If they are going

* For a criticism of the Paradise Regained which some employers do try to make see Chapter VII.

to appeal to efficiency let them first know themselves and the factories of which they are the governors. Knowing these can they really continue to claim that the present industrial system is efficient? Let us take an average factory, neither one of the best nor one of the worst. We shall find in it several hundreds, or perhaps several thousands, of human beings, some of them engaged directly in the task of production; others supervising them; others in the office adding up accounts and doing the necessary clerical work; others, the general staff of the factory, engaged principally in processes of buying and selling. How many of these people are really doing as good work as they could do? How many of the workers in a factory are really turning out the output they could turn out? How far is there, as a rule, any real co-operation between one department and another? How many of the clerks and managers are engaged upon work which, so far from possessing any social utility, is really directed merely to putting the profit into one man's pocket rather than another's? The answer is to be found in what the capitalists themselves are constantly saying about the industrial system. They are always telling us of monstrous restriction of output that occurs among the working class, of the tremendous increase that would result if only a spirit of willing co-operation between employers and workmen could be established. Of late years they have also begun to tell us of the enormous waste which

results from competitive industry, and the lack of co-ordination between one factory and another; and, rather paradoxically it may seem, they have begun to eliminate this waste by means of the very practice which they so reprehend on the part of the workers, namely, the restriction of output. If we need arguments to prove that industry is at the present day inefficient, every Scientific Management expert and every progressive capitalist is full to the brim of them.

The argument, then, that the present system must be preserved because it is efficient really resolves itself into an argument that the present system must be preserved because it could be made so efficient. That is to say, it is an argument based, not upon what actually exists, but upon a theory of what might exist. As soon as it is seen in this light it loses the glamour which our leading industrialists try to throw round it by combining its advocacy with the statement that they are "practical men." They are theorists no less than the most fanciful Utopian is a theorist, and they are becoming more theoretical every day as they realise how thoroughly inefficient they are.

Against the theory of "scientific" industry organised upon capitalistic lines it is surely permissible to set the opposite theory of a democratic industry. A great part of the inefficiency of industry to-day arises from the fact that everybody is pulling different ways. Instead of all co-operating in the task of serving the community by the

production of wealth the producers are contending against one another and against the public for a realisation of a profit. When they see that this leads to inefficiency they are ready enough, in some cases, to claim to-day that it can be remedied if we will only realise that industry is in effect a national service. Mr. W. L. Hichens, for instance, is never weary of telling an attentive world of this fact, and Mr. Hichens is the chairman of Messrs. Cammell Laird's, and surely ought to know. But the remedy which is usually put forward by those who claim industry as a national service is merely a more efficient and closely-knit system of industry still based on the idea of realising a personal profit. It may be a limited profit coupled with some form of Excess Profits taxation; it may be a profit in which the workers to a small extent share; but it is still a profit, a toll levied upon the community by various groups of producers.

It is my fundamental contention, and that of all Socialists, that the root inefficiency of industry lies in the fact that it is at present organised for profit, whereas it should be organised for use. Such organisation for profit inevitably entails the present division of industry into classes and social castes, and makes impossible either a real spirit of co-operation between the various elements which are necessary to production or a real sense of public service on the part of any one of these elements. A mere extension and adjustment of the profit-making system cannot remove any of the real springs of

industrial inefficiency. My positive contention, then, is that the only way to remove industrial inefficiency is to organise industry on the lines of real democratic self-government, to eliminate the whole sordid business of making profits, and make every worker in industry a self-governing servant, not of a collectivist State, but of a democratic Commonwealth. I believe that a system organised on these lines would be far more efficient than either the present system or the development of the present system which the Scientific Managers have imagined, because I believe that the most powerful of human motives is the motive of self-directed service, and that if men are set free to organise their own service in the interest of their fellow men they will do it far better than even the most "scientific" of State-appointed, self-appointed, or money-appointed experts.

A system of industrial organisation based upon self-government of men at their work would not merely, I believe, be more efficient in a purely industrial sense, but would also make a very different type of citizen. Where the present system deadens initiative and encourages mediocrity it would call out the qualities which only flourish freely among free men—the willingness to experiment and to take risks, the desire to do things well for the sake of doing them well, the desire to co-operate with one's fellows which is implanted in every "political animal." I cannot prove this any more than the Scientific Managers can prove that

their system provides a way out of all forms of industrial unrest, "ca' canny," and the other practices which are pimples on the face of the existing industrial order; but I can at least believe it and hope that others will believe it with me; for in these fundamental matters an ounce of belief is worth a ton of proof.

Let us be quite sure what we mean by industrial self-government; for if we are not very clear we run the risk of seeming to agree with all sorts of people who hold very different types of view. The phrase "industrial self-government," taken by itself, may mean several different things. In the first place, in the mouth of a capitalist owner or manager it very often means simply freedom of industry from State intervention and its direction by the various capitalists and managers who are at the head of the different businesses. This, for instance, is, broadly speaking, the sense in which the phrase is used by Mr. E. J. P. Benn and by many others of the strongest advocates of "industrial self-government." They do not mean by it any essential change in the industrial order; they mean merely a more scientific organisation of that order mainly along the old lines. They desire, indeed, an abandonment to a considerable extent of the methods of competition between manufacturers in the same branch of industry, and a substitution of a system of co-operation among these manufacturers under which they believe that a far higher level of industrial efficiency will be secured; but the self-

government which they have in mind is essentially the self-government of industry in relation to other forms of social organisation, and not the self-government of the whole body of producers employed in the industry.

A parallel will make this point quite clear. When the Czecho-Slovaks or the Irish or the Poles demand self-government, the demand goes up from persons who hold the most divergent theories with regard to the right method of organisation inside, *e.g.*, a Polish State. They desire an independent Poland; but some of them want that independent Poland to be an autocracy or an oligarchy, while others want it to be in the fullest sense of the word a democracy. They are all advocates, in a sense, of self-government for Poland; but their conceptions of the nature of this self-government are essentially different. In just the same way amongst those who advocate industrial self-government there is room for the widest possible divergence of view with regard to the actual constitution which self-governing industry ought to adopt. Some want industrial autocracy, or industrial oligarchy, while others want real industrial democracy.

The objections which I have been urging against the existing industrial order would hold just as strongly against a self-governing industry of an oligarchic or autocratic character. My complaint is primarily not that industry is controlled from outside by the State, or by any other social organisation, but that industry is controlled from

above by a few who exercise the greater part of the authority. What I want is that industry should be organised on the most democratic basis possible. That is to say, that every worker employed in industry should have to the fullest extent a say in the carrying on of industry. This involves industrial self-government in the sense of the freedom of industry from external intervention; but such freedom from external intervention is not the primary object which I have in view, but only one of the means of attaining that object, which is industrial democracy. The root evil of the present industrial order is that it affords to the ordinary worker in industry no means of expression and no chance of responsibility or active citizenship. Nay, more, it is actually degrading and dehumanising in its effects. So far from educating men and women to take their places as good citizens of the Commonwealth, it actually knocks out of them such little education as they have time to gather before they enter the factory or in their leisure moments. It is not a civilising but a barbarising influence.

Mr. Benn, it is true, does not confine his advocacy of self-government of industry to the first of the two senses which I have indicated. He does also pay a certain amount of attention to the internal structure of the industry which he desires to set up. But no one who has read Mr. Benn's two books, "Trade as a Science" and "The Trade of To-morrow," can make any mistake with regard to the type of industrial order which Mr. Benn

desires to establish. He is out for a "constitutional" system of industrial organisation. He would leave the present owners and rulers of industry enthroned in the seats of the mighty, and he would admit the Commons of industry to some small share in the determination of their conditions, much as our own House of Commons in its early days began as a body whose function was mainly that of approving measures dictated to it by the higher powers of the State. Mr. Benn's system advocates for industry a method of organisation which is somewhere about the fourteenth century in its mental outlook. What I want is a system of industrial democracy which is at least twentieth century, if not twenty-first.

What has been said about Mr. Benn applies with even greater force to the Whitley Report. When a Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, including well-known employers and Labour men and economists, sat down to prepare a report on the future relations between employers and workmen it was quite obvious that one of two things was bound to happen. Either there would be several divergent reports, or else there would be a report which left matters pretty much as they were. Despite the trumpetings of the Press in celebration of the Whitley Report, it is the second of these two things that has happened. An agreed report was presented by the various groups represented on the Committee; but this agreed report, although it may have verbally satisfied the various parties, only

satisfied them because they all interpreted it in different senses. The Whitley Report in its practical effects closely resembles the proposals which we have already attributed to Mr. Benn. It proposes the setting up in each industry of a sort of constitutional assembly called a Joint Standing Industrial Council, together with local and works bodies of a similar character. It proposes that these assemblies should be representative of Capital and Labour in equal numbers;- and therein it achieves its first denial of democracy, for I have heard it said that there are more Labour men than capitalists in this world. But in any case, even if this point of democracy is waived, the Whitley Report does not, and in fact could not, confer any real authority upon the assemblies which it proposes to set up. It leaves the present lords and masters of industry in control of their material possessions and of the management of the industrial machine, and at the most it only sets up certain consultative bodies partly representative of the rank and file, but without power to enforce their decisions in any way. In fact it does nothing to lessen the gulf between employers and workmen or to alter the fundamental character of social relationships which is necessarily bound up with the existing industrial order. As machinery the "Whitley" councils may be good or they may be bad. That depends on the circumstances of each case and of the spirit in which they are administered; but, whatever their merits, viewed in this light they do not in any sense establish, or even

take a step towards establishing, in industry the sort of industrial self-government which I have in mind. For they still rest upon the negation of democracy and the retention of the rights of property and management in the hands of the ruling class.

My conception of industrial democracy essentially and necessarily involves beginning at the bottom. The sort of democracy that I want is democracy which will correct the faults of the present industrial system by calling out in each rank-and-file worker the maximum amount of individuality and sense of free will and responsibility. This can only be done if each worker, acting together with his fellows, takes unto himself a share of the power and control which are at present confined to the few. That is to say, any real movement directed to change the industrial order must satisfy two conditions. In the first place, it must be a movement of the workers themselves directed to an assumption of control, and not a movement by the ruling class directed to the granting of an apparent share in control; and, in the second place, it must be a movement beginning in the workshops and other places of work and resulting in a transference from the present ruling class to the workers of functions which the working class, by its will, its capacity, and its knowledge, is able to take over.

Samuel Smiles was the prophet of Victorian England. There has not yet arisen a prophet who will interpret for us in the same way the new con-

ception of "self-help." The new "self-help" must be not individual but collective; it must result, not in the raising of one man above his fellows by personal "push" or "abstinence," but in the raising of a whole class by means of the "push" and initiative which are distributed, unequally it is true, throughout that class. This does not mean that there is the less necessity for leaders or for personal initiative; it means that these leaders must make their personal contribution to a common pool in the interests of their class and of the Commonwealth of which that class forms by far the greatest part. It is upon the organised self-help of a working class possessed of "push" and knowledge, but at the same time actuated by a strong communal sense, that the possibility of democracy in industry as well as in politics ultimately depends.

The new movements which have sprung up inside Trade Unionism in recent years are of vital importance because, with all their imperfections, they are on the lines which I have indicated above as the true lines of advance. They are movements of organised self-help; they are movements dominated by the collective "pushfulness" of the working class, and animated by its desire for greater knowledge and power. Both the strong movement towards working-class education, of which I shall speak further in the next two chapters, and the movements which in almost every industry have led the rank and file of Trade Unionism to form organisations of their own, inside

the existing structure of Trade Unionism, for the furtherance of more advanced claims than the constitutional machinery of the Unions can at present be persuaded to sanction, are signs that the working class is realising that in organised self-help, consciously directed by a communal purpose and a social ideal, lies the only hope of changing the industrial order. The Shop Stewards' Movement, strong in the munitions industries, and already beginning to spread to other branches of manufacturing industry, owes its rapid development to the fact that it provides the nucleus of an organisation round which the forces making for real change can group themselves and use their power to effect. The same can be said of the rank-and-file movement in other industries, such as the strong movement represented by the District Councils of the National Union of Railwaymen or the various forward movements among miners, Post Office employees, and many others.

It is surely significant that no sooner do rank-and-file Trade Unionists begin to put their heads together in organisations of this sort than the one subject which comes to the front in their deliberations is the control of industry. They are alike in revolt against the present industrial order. They realise to the full its devastating effects on human character and the effective barrier which it imposes against the active citizenship of the working class in the Commonwealth; and almost instinctively they see that the only way in which they can

effectively move towards an altered status is by beginning in a comparatively humble way in the workshops to transfer from the employers to themselves the functions of workshop management, not necessarily with the intention of stopping there, or of resting satisfied when the workshop has passed into their control, but regarding the workshop as the essential starting point for an aggressive campaign on the part of the working-class movement.

I have described at length in other books the nature of this rank and file movement* and the nature of the claims which are being put forward by the more advanced spirits in the industrial movement. Here I do not desire to enter into any discussion of these problems. My object is merely to state in the broadest terms possible the essential nature of the working-class demand. It is a demand that there shall be a transference of control from the present rulers of the economic system to the mass of the industrial workers, and an institution of democracy in industry as well as in the political sphere. Secondly, it is an assertion that this transference must be won in the main by the workers' own endeavours, and cannot be conceded from without. It is only by winning their own emancipation by their own efforts that the working classes will gain the power to direct industry when they have won it. In the third place, it is in effect a repudiation of those claims for industrial self-

* See "Introduction to Trade Unionism," Part III., and "Self-Government in Industry," Chapter IV.

government which seek merely to entrench the existing industrial order by admitting the organised workers through the present Trade Union leaders to a limited and illusory share in the councils of industry, through joint bodies representing the employers and the working class. It does not necessarily repudiate joint machinery; but it does most clearly repudiate the idea that such joint machinery can be an instrument of the sort of control which it desires to establish. In the fourth place, it is a demand by the workers for knowledge as the source of power—knowledge of their position in the industrial order, and knowledge of the means by which alone they can assume executive control. It is this question of knowledge that we must now discuss in greater detail.

CHAPTER VII: THE SOCIAL REFORMERS

IF the foregoing chapters have made my meaning at all clear, it should not be difficult to proceed to a conclusion. The degrading and servile character of the present economic system lies above all in the qualities which it calls forth in the majority of men. It appeals, where it appeals at all, not to their manhood, but to their cupidity: and more often it does not make even this mean appeal. It trusts, in the majority of cases, to the economic power of the few as a guarantee of the subordination of the many, whom it regards merely as means to the production of wealth, not for the use of all, but for the profit of a few. It is therefore based on a denial of the ultimate and absolute value of every human being, and on an assertion that the majority of human beings can be treated as if they were not human beings at all, but commodities to be bought and sold "as a grocer sells butter."*

Some glimmering of this horror presents itself to the minds of a good many men and women in our days. But many of these men and women shrink back appalled, and refuse to face the full consequences. Their "social conscience" is to some extent awakened; but instead of attacking the system which makes these atrocities inevitable, they waste time, money and effort in endeavouring to mitigate the worst abuses without changing the system itself. We may give these men and women

* National Guild League, Leaflet No. 2.

credit, in many cases, for the best intentions; but, unfortunately, the palliatives which they devise too often mean only a strengthening and an intensification of more fundamental wrongs. I do not say that they "pity the plumage, but forget the dying bird"; but I do say that they seek to paint the plumage when the bird is dying.

Not the Insurance Act itself, which is Prussian of the Prussians, but the support accorded to it by many well-meaning people, is open to this charge. No one disputes or could dispute the need for a far better national provision for matters of Public Health; and, with this need in mind, your well-meaning, socially conscientious idiots are only too apt to say—"Well, here is a measure which at least does something for Public Health: it is not quite what we wanted, but it is something. Let us vote for it, and back those who intend to carry it through." The result in this case was that something was indeed done, though it was done very badly and wastefully, for Public Health; but, in the doing of this, opportunity was taken to rivet the chains of the industrial system more firmly upon the working class.

This is exactly what is likely to happen every time a question of Social Reform forces its way to the front. The ruling classes will do something to meet the demand; but they will try to do it in such a way as to make the present economic system more secure. In this particular case, by giving the employer statutory power to make deductions from

the wages of the employee, they made the employer an organ of national government, and placed the employee in a clearly dependent status. The workman got, no doubt, his panel practitioner; but he got also a new hall-mark of wage-slavery.

To-day, exactly the same problem is arising in relation to education. The cry has gone up from the Social Reformers that there must be more and better education. If they keep it up they will get more education; but the ruling classes will do their best to get their own back by providing education of an inferior sort. I do not mean by this that they will provide less efficient education than in the past: I mean that they will do their best to give to the new education such a twist as will secure the training of more efficient wage-slaves, and not necessarily of better citizens. With the aid of Works Schools, permitted in the Education Act of 1918, and of a technical bias in the education of children, they will endeavour to pump the economic system into the nation's manhood while it is young, so that it will not rebel against the system when it has reached years of discretion.

The plain fact is that the present economic system does not want mending—it wants ending; and the only attack that is worth making is a direct attack upon the foundations of the system itself. Those who are content to allow themselves the luxury of pity and to alleviate the lot of the wretched by piecemeal methods do no good, and may often do harm. For the net effect of their

efforts may well be to leave the system stronger without making it any less degrading.

But let not this attitude be misunderstood. It is very far from implying that it is not worth while to bother at all about immediate measures, or that we can afford to let reforms alone in the confidence that it will be "all right on the night" of the revolution. My attack is directed not to reforms, but to reformers—to those who, in the words of Hubert Lagardelle, "*ne voient dans le réformisme que la réforme.*" As this raises a point of the greatest importance, I want to be sure of making my meaning perfectly clear.

The "reformer"—he who "sees in reforms only reform"—is one who judges measures of reform solely in accordance with their immediate effects on the particular problem of which he is thinking. He has usually no complete or coherent social philosophy: he only realises the existence of certain particular defects in the social system, and seeks for remedies or palliatives for these particular defects. He lives in the present, or at least visualises only the immediate future; and his measures are all directed to particular abuses and not to any fundamental change in the social system.

The constructive "revolutionary," on the other hand, may be just as eager for immediate and partial changes as the "social reformer"; but he refers all such proposed changes to a standard which is present in his mind. He is, if you like, a doctrinaire—for a doctrinaire is usually, after all, only

a man who tries to "see life steadily, and see it whole." He seeks a fundamental change in the social system; but he is willing and anxious to accept and to welcome immediate and partial changes if only they are such as to minister to his ideal.

Even if the "revolutionary" be also in some sense a catastrophist, and believe that at some point in the change of the economic system there must come a sharp and sudden break, this does not absolve him from the need for having an immediate policy of partial changes. Until his catastrophe comes he must prepare not merely for it, but for the new social order which he hopes will follow it. He must lay the foundations of the new society even before the old one has been destroyed.

The difference, then, between the social reformer and the constructive social revolutionary is not that the one possesses an immediate policy and the other does not; but that in the one case the immediate policy is opportunistic and fragmentary, whereas in the other it is coherent and conscious, directed to a known end. The revolutionary, unlike the reformer, has a test which he can apply to all suggestions for reform. Will this proposed change, he asks, help Society along the road to the ideal which he has in mind, or will it retard its progress? If the answer is that the particular reform in question will retard the general progress of Society towards the given ideal, the revolutionary will reject the reform, even if its immediate effects are likely to be

in some sense meliorative. The reformer, on the other hand, will accept it, quite unconscious of its underlying implications and more distant effects.

What the Commonwealth needs to-day is more of the revolutionary spirit in the sense described above. That is to say, it needs men with the imagination to frame an ideal, and with the courage of their idealistic convictions. I realise fully that it is difficult for those who lack economic security —that is, for the great mass of the people—to take a long view; but this merely imposes an additional obligation upon those who are in a position to look ahead.

Even the best-meaning of social reformers often suffer from moral cowardice. They dare not face the full implications of the evils which they cannot help seeing, and they seek to salve their consciences and to stifle their imaginations by working for partial and immediate ends. In the course of such work they may for the most part easily and soon forget their brief and imperfect vision of the ideal. The older they get, the milder, as a rule, become their projects of reform, until they dry up into temperamental conservatives with perhaps a surviving interest in temperance reform, or charity organisation, or some other equally unimaginative pursuit. Vision and idealism will, no doubt, be always mainly for youth; but, again, that only imposes upon youth an additional obligation to see visions and to make substance of them.

I have spoken so far entirely of well-meaning

persons; but I do not regard all social reformers as well-meaning. In most of them, the protective instinct finds a place, and in some it really overshadows and dominates everything else. There are employers who believe in "Welfare Work" not because they desire to satisfy the human needs of their employees, but in order to make them contented with their lot, and prevent them from becoming "contaminated" by "Bolshevik" influences. A recent volume, published by a leading official of the Labour Department of one of the biggest firms in this country, seems from its tone and tendency to belong to this class.

Just as there are employers of this type, so there are social reformers in other spheres besides that of industry. The leaders of the Charity Organisation Society and similar movements have no doubt a social theory of their own, even if an extremely revolting one; but their followers for the most part have no such theory. Some are merely benevolent; but others are consciously animated by the desire to preserve the existing order of Society by looking after the poor with a tender care which often degenerates into meddlesomeness and inquisition. Among the ranks of these organisations will be found most of those who have a *penchant* for minding the business of their "social inferiors."

The instinct which makes the working classes resent and mistrust the social reformers is perfectly sound. They resent and mistrust them because

they find themselves approached as inferiors and not as equals. Men and women who really believe in human equality and in the humanity of Labour do not find themselves, unless by accident, in the camp of social reform: they attach themselves to one or other of the movements which seek a fundamental change of system. Consequently, the leadership of reform movements falls mostly to persons whose idea of social reformation is that of mechanical reforms imposed upon the working classes from outside their own ranks. The Fabian Society represents the left wing of social reform, while the Charity Organisation Society represents the right wing.

Labour is perfectly right to mistrust any person or any movement that tells it what great things can be done for it by someone else. It should trust only those who tell it what great things it can do for itself. For unless Labour is capable of doing things for itself, it is surely obvious that it is not worth while to do things for Labour. The reason why it is worth while to bother about social questions at all is that human beings have wills of their own which will enable them to direct their own lives if they get a chance: those who believe that the majority of people are simply material for the social experiments of the few had much better give up social questions and mind their own business.

I suppose that by this time what I have written will have seriously exasperated quite a number of worthy people. They will be convinced that I do

not care a button for social reforms, and that the point of view which is here stated is utterly unpractical. I have, however, only been saying these nasty things in order to clear the vision for a consideration of social reforms in their true perspective. By themselves—regarded as ends—they are utterly useless; but as means they have an importance which can hardly be overestimated.

The effect of good social reforms is not that of establishing the Commonwealth on a satisfactory basis—that is a matter of social revolution. But it may be that of removing serious hindrances in the way of social revolution. I can make this clear most easily if I take, and contrast, a few instances of good and bad social reforms.

A social reform is good, from the standpoint of the social revolutionary, if it either is a step towards, or removes hindrances to, the establishment of the social order which he desires. The raising of wages and, still more, the shortening of hours of labour, the provision of better education for the mass of the people, the improvement of housing conditions, and the creation of a real Public Health service are all reforms which in themselves should command the fullest support because they both remove hindrances to, and bring nearer the establishment of, a saner economic order. But any or all of these reforms may be offered under conditions which make them bad or unacceptable. Higher wages must be rejected if they involve compulsory arbitration or the abandonment of the right to

strike; shorter hours if they mean speeding up at the good pleasure of the employer. Educational reform must be opposed if it means the perversion of the schools to the training of efficient and obedient wage-slaves for the employers. Better houses are merely traps for Labour if they are owned by the employers or are under the employers' control. And a Public Health Service is not a boon, but a tyranny, if it imposes upon the poor all manner of compulsory inquisitions and wage-deductions from which the ruling classes are immune.

In short, we must fix our eyes on the spiritual as well as on the material content of proposed reforms. If we do that, we shall often find the wolf of bureaucratic Prussianism lurking under the sheepskin of progressive policy.

Our aim must be to secure for the mass of the people the best conditions that can be secured under the existing social order; but, even more, our aim must be to prevent the further imposition upon the workers of the Servile State. For, though the reformers have so often and so contemptuously ridiculed the suggestion, the Servile State is not a "bogy," but an ever-present danger. To any intelligent man of good will, it appears palpably as the next move of intelligent Capitalism, a move which will be made by some with a full consciousness of what they are doing, and by many more with an imperfect consciousness based upon the protective instinct. They see rising before them

the tide of economic unrest, and instinct and reason alike prompt them to improvise a barrier of reforms.

This is, no doubt, a dangerous game, and it is quite possible that, even if they get their way, their reforms may prove ineffective and only whet the workers' appetite for more. That, however, depends very largely on the exact mould in which the reforms are cast. The more interference and regimentation they can introduce into their reforms, the greater is their chance of success in their risky experiment of the Servile State. This is true above all in the sphere of education, and it is to the question of educational reform that we must next turn our attention.

CHAPTER VIII: LABOUR AND EDUCATION

THERE are few bores more wearisome than the bores who are always talking about education. There is not a man with experience of propagandist meetings of any kind who does not know to his cost the speaker who rises from the body of the hall and takes part in any discussion on any subject whatsoever, for the purpose of saying that until the working classes are better educated it is of no use for them to demand improved status or economic position, and that it is therefore necessary for all reformers to concentrate their attention upon the question of education as a preliminary to the securing of real reforms.

The most annoying thing about this type of educationalist is that he is so largely right up to a point. It is quite true that the working class can only secure a real control over industry or over the Commonwealth if they have the knowledge and the education which will enable them to be efficient in the task of control. It is true that where there is no education the people perish; it is true that the power of the present governing class depends, I will not say upon their own education, but upon the educational system which they are able to turn to their own ends. Labour must indeed pay the greatest possible regard to questions of educational reconstruction, and the bores in the body of the hall are to that extent right. It is, nevertheless, of the greatest possible importance to point out where they are wrong. It is not by concentrating all our

efforts upon educational reform that we shall get either the amount or the kind of education that we want, for the sort of education that the working class needs must not be construed in a narrow or professional sense. It is not simply the education of the schools, or even of adult schools, that the workers want; it is just as much the education of the workshop and the education which comes from the actual exercise of power and responsibility. We must keep in mind two different kinds of education and two different ways of attaining them if we are to get a clear perception of the place which educational reconstruction ought to have in the policy of the working class.

Let us take first the education of the schools. I said something in an earlier chapter about the effects of our public educational system under present economic conditions. I pointed out that the power of "picking over" the workers and selecting the best men for their own purposes is exercised by the ruling classes largely through the Elementary and Secondary Schools. They are places which provide, not a training in responsibility for the whole mass of the workers, but an opportunity to the ruling classes to select for such training those whom they regard as likely to minister to their own needs.

The character of the education that is given in our Elementary Schools is still largely servile. I do not say that this arises altogether from a deliberate policy, but it is inevitable under present conditions. We under-pay our teachers, and in

consequence we get poor material for the teaching profession. We under-staff our schools, and in consequence we ask these underpaid and under-trained teachers to look after huge classes that are much too large for effective educational method. The consequence is that the teacher is driven to adopt mechanical methods of discipline imposed from without, to reduce his educational method to the simplest possible formulæ, and, instead of trying to bring out in the children all that is most individual and expressive, to push somehow into their heads certain half-truths and certain isolated facts which may be "useful" to them in after-life. Not only are our teachers not good enough and our classes far too large—our school buildings are still lamentably insufficient, and, what is worse, our schools are utterly individualistic in their tendencies. It is true that they herd the children together in large classes, and this may seem to be socialistic, as Socialism is understood by the Anti-Socialist Union,* but, on the other hand, they afford absolutely no opportunity for working together and for common initiative among the children themselves. They have no substitute for the organised co-operation of the "better class" boarding school, and they do not, for the most part, even attempt to find any substitute.

It is the plain and simple truth that we have one education for the rich and another for the poor. No

* The Anti-Socialist Union has now obligingly pointed the moral by re-naming itself "The Reconstruction Society."

rich man, and almost no middle-class man, who sends his son to school thinks mainly of the actual information which his son will acquire at school. He thinks in proportion as he is wise far more of the sort of social environment and the sort of training in responsibility that his son will encounter. In fact he regards the school, not as a pumping station, but as a true place of education. And what is true of sons is every day becoming more true of daughters also.

Contrast with this the machine-made education of the poor. The average rich boy with no particular brains may not learn very much at school, but he does at least leave it better equipped to face the common hazards of the world. He has at least learnt to some extent how to fend for himself, and how to act in co-operation with his fellows in his own class: but the average poor boy who leaves the Elementary School has learnt none of these things He has acquired a certain amount of information which he will probably proceed promptly to forget; he has been to some extent trained for the following of an occupation in after-life, if not in a technical sense at least by becoming used to an externally imposed discipline; but he has not, so far as the system is concerned, learnt anything about the way in which he can best live his life.

This indictment is of course a general indictment which cannot be universally applied. There are always teachers who rise above the difficulties imposed upon them by the present system. There

are always boys and girls who can learn something and acquire something more than information, even under the unpleasant surroundings of the present-day school. I am not pretending that what I have given above is a fair picture if it is taken as a complete description of the present-day school system; but I am contending that it does represent an important truth, and that the broad contrast that it draws between the education of the rich and that of the poor is a true contrast.

But does the difference stop short at the actual sort of education provided? It is also the case that the rich and middle-class boy's education and, to a less extent the rich and the middle-class girl's, continues for the most part well into manhood or womanhood. Moreover, it becomes progressively a more free education as the boy or girl grows older. The actual information acquired becomes less and less important, and the boy or girl is left more and more free to turn attention in the direction of any particular question or subject in which he or she may be interested, and to develop along individual lines. The social element in education, again, counts for a great deal. The upper forms of the public schools and the Universities are honeycombed with Societies which boys and girls create, organise and manage for themselves, and in which they express their own outlook on the world. These Societies call out exactly the qualities which are needed for co-operative citizenship, and they make it certain that a full opportunity will be given

to each boy or girl to find the opportunity for self-development.

Of course, when I say that they furnish a good ground for citizenship I am not blind to the fact that at the present day this citizenship is all too often a class citizenship based upon a co-operation which stops short at the class of which these boys and girls are members. I am not upholding our better-class education because it is a class education. I am merely saying that it includes features which ought to be included in an education free from class bias and open to everybody.

Again, let us contrast with this education the education of the poor. Just when upper and middle class education is attaining its maximum value and affording the widest opportunities for self-expression and self-development, working-class education comes to a dead stop. Just as they are reaching the age when they might begin really to develop qualities of initiative and responsibility, the children of the working class—or the overwhelming majority of them—are chucked out of the schools and flung upon the labour market. Then follow those years which are the despair of every educationist. At thirteen or fourteen, or sometimes fifteen, a boy or girl leaves school. Nothing has been done to awaken the desire for further education; the routine methods of the Elementary School forbid that. The experience of the wage system has not yet roused even a minority to a sense of the need for self-education as the road

to power. Consequently for some years practically the whole of the working class passes absolutely out of the range of effective educational effort and spends the years which are most valuable from an educational point of view, not in learning things or gaining character, but in forgetting what has been learnt, and too often in losing character, or in gaining the wrong character.

A few years later, when the child has become a man or a woman, there may be an opportunity, through one of the agencies for working-class education, of getting back a small minority of these lost sheep of the educational system; but even if they come back they have usually forgotten, not merely what they had learnt, but how to learn. They have got out of the way not merely of being educated, but of educating themselves, and it is a painful climb back, which only a few accomplish, into effective adult education. It is true that the appalling results of this breaking short of education at fourteen or thereabouts are recognised amongst all schools of thought which pay any attention whatsoever to the educational problem; but there still remains as an obstacle to any remedy the apathy of the vast majority, the active opposition of industrial interests, and the stinginess and lack of prevision of the rate-payer. Mr. Fisher's Education Act of 1918 made a mild and inadequate suggestion for bridging the gulf between childhood and the adult. The Bill, as introduced, provided for the continuance of education for a few hours a

week up to eighteen. At once two distinct currents of opposition became manifest. One of the parties of opposition pointed out the dislocation in the industrial system which would result from a stoppage of the supply of child labour in the mills and factories, particularly in the textile areas, and showed itself for the most part completely unwilling to take any steps to readjust its industrial methods to educational needs. There could have been no clearer case of the habit of our governing classes of regarding the vast mass of the people, not as human beings with a right to the opportunities of active citizenship based upon knowledge, but as mere raw material of industry to be used up in the service of wealth production and private profit.

Unfortunately a section of the working classes joined themselves, for different reasons, to this interested opposition of manufacturers. They said that they could not afford to lose the wages which came to them from the labour of their children, and they often added that the education which they had had in their childhood had been good enough for them, and therefore ought to be good enough for their children. Although the economic causes of this opposition are sufficiently manifest, it is hard to regard this attitude of the working class with even the scant sympathy which it deserves; but it may at least be pointed out that this attitude is the expression of the morality and the outlook on life which are engendered in the wage slave by the education of wage slavery. That section of the work-

ing class which has felt for more than a century the full rigours of the factory system has lost in the process most of its idealism, and has come to accept as inevitable the conditions against which it rebelled in the early days of the Industrial Revolution.

As we know, the result of this double opposition was that Mr. Fisher dropped completely out of his proposals the immediate enactment of compulsory education up to 18, and postponed the full operation of his scheme under the mistaken impression that the great industrialists would take advantage of the respite to readjust industry for the new conditions. In fact, they will of course do nothing of the sort, and the opposition will have to be faced again, probably under less favourable conditions, when the time arrives for reconsideration.

The second kind of opposition was of a more subtle but also of a more dangerous character. It came from those who said: "By all means let us have more education, but let us make sure that this education is directed to the interests of industry. Let us continue the education of children, but in special schools in which purely technical training will be provided, in order that the supply of skilled labour may be better maintained." A sign of the strength of this attitude may be found in the most dangerous proposal in the Act of 1918—the proposal to allow compulsory Works Schools upon employers' premises, to be regarded as fulfilling the needs of continued education.

Of course, in protesting against this idea of continued education of a purely technical kind, directed purely to the needs of industry, and not to the needs of the scholar as a citizen, I do not mean to say that no technical training at all ought to be provided; but I do mean to say that technical training of an industrial character is in no sense a substitute for education properly so called. If more technical training is wanted let it be given, by all means; but let it be given in addition to, and not in substitution for, education of a civic character. What is wanted is that the gulf between childhood and manhood should be completely filled up, not in order that the employer may secure better wage slaves, but in order that the children of the working class may secure an education as good as that which is now obtained by the children of the upper and middle classes.

I make no apology for returning again and again to the point that the gulf between the date at which the ordinary boy leaves school and the date at which he becomes an active citizen is a fatal barrier to any real educational reformation. As long as education for the many stops short at any point before the boy has become a man, or the girl a woman, those who acquiesce in such a situation will be recognising and acquiescing in one education for the rich and another for the poor. They will be accepting the view that the needs of industry have precedence of the needs of citizenship, and that it is not possible or not desirable to provide the mass

of the people with the opportunity for self-development which the rich and middle classes quite properly demand for themselves.

The immoral character of this class division in our educational system is not difficult to discern. It is implied throughout that entirely different ideals are to be served and entirely different methods adopted in educating the children of the rich and in training the children of the poor. The rich are to be taught how to govern, the poor are to be taught how to obey. The rich and middle-class children are destined either to positions of more or less responsibility or at least of more or less power. The working-class child, unless he is picked out by a process of selection from the mass of his fellows, and given special facilities for further education, is intended merely as a member of the industrial rank and file which is excluded from all real control. As soon, therefore, as enough has been done to make a more or less efficient rank-and-file worker there is, on this showing, no need for any further education for the great majority.

It is true that this view is misguided and unenlightened, even if its pre-supposition of capacity is correct. It does not train the most efficient wage workers; it does not secure the best results from the rank and file. That is why the more enlightened type of employer is now pressing, as we have seen, for more education of a technical character; but however much education may be pressed for by members of the ruling class, it is still animated by

exactly the same idea. The aim is still to provide only that amount of education which can be regarded as reproductive capital expenditure—only that amount which will show results in the industrial balance sheet and make the commerce of the nation more efficient in world competition. The upper or middle-class boy requires for his industrial functions in many cases a scientific training and a technique of a highly elaborate character, but no one dreams of giving this as a reason for early specialisation in his case, or for the abandonment of general education at the earliest possible moment. It is clearly recognised in the case of the upper and middle classes that technical ability by itself is no good for those who are to have a share in the direction of industry. It is necessary, in addition, that they should be good all-round men, well educated in such a way as to possess a sense of responsibility and a capacity for power. In their case, therefore, technical training always follows upon a good general education. They remain at school almost without specialisation till eighteen or nineteen; many of them continue their general education without reference to the particular profession which they intend to follow at the Universities, and there has recently been a move towards enlisting more University men in business. Specialisation when it comes is therefore, in the case of the professional, broad-based upon all-round education.

Clearly the ideal behind the education of this

sort is a quite different one from the ideal which lies behind the proposals for better technical training of the working class. In their own case the governing classes clearly recognise that the period of adolescence is the critical period in education, and they postpone technical training until the most critical years of adolescence are over. There is no human reason why the same should not be true of children of other classes. It is certainly too much to hope for that in a capitalist society the whole of the population should have the chance of continuing its school-time education at least to manhood, but there is nothing less that can really satisfy the human needs of any section of the population: whether the boy or girl is destined for a calling which requires special technical training or not, he or she is at least destined for citizenship, and good citizenship requires the best possible general education. As long as the majority of children pass away from the schools at fourteen or fifteen or even sixteen, there can be no pretence that we are really educating our people for citizenship.

That is why it is so enormously important to secure the principle that education should continue up to the latest possible age. The Education Bill of 1918, as originally drafted, preferred the proposal for a few hours' weekly schooling up to eighteen to the counter-proposal of half-time schooling up to sixteen. In taking this view Mr. Fisher was clearly right. The hours suggested

were utterly inadequate, but they could have been extended; the main point was to establish, without further delay, that education ought to be continued right through the period of adolescence. It is, therefore, all the more calamitous that Mr. Fisher so easily gave away one of the vital principles of his Bill.

I do not suggest that if the Education Bill had been carried in substantially unaltered form it would have gone more than half an inch to remove the class distinction in education. To insist on a few hours' schooling up to eighteen, and even so to leave wide loopholes for the introduction of technical training during these hours, is certainly not to abolish class distinction in education. It is a beginning, perhaps, but it is a very, very little one. Nor even if the inconceivable had happened, and Parliament had enacted full-time education for every boy and girl up to eighteen and found teachers in necessary numbers of fair quality, would the class basis of education have been thereby removed. The workers need, not simply more education, but also education of a very different sort. Doubtless the extension of educational facilities and the provision of more education for the mass of the people would by itself do something to change the curriculum and the nature of the teaching, but it would not do very much, and it is possible that even the additional facilities for education which will be provided after the war will be made the excuse for a

new class distinction in the curriculum provided. It cannot have escaped attention that during the war period our schools have been very largely militarised. Dangerous teachers have been driven out, Cadet Corps and flag-wagging, and simple talks about the Empire have been driven in. Lord Meath's detestable experiment of Empire Day has caught on in schools if nowhere else. There will obviously be a determined effort in some quarters to make our schools good training grounds for a docile Unionist, Imperialist and Industrialist population. Much attention has been concentrated in late years upon the teaching of a mysterious subject called "civics." Properly taught civics, despite its name, is an essential part of the school curriculum. Improperly taught it is the most pernicious form of indoctrination of the young. What every boy and girl ought to learn at school is something of the organisation, the character and history of industrial and political society both in theory and in practice. What they ought emphatically not to learn is a Shorter Catechism of Industrial and Political Subservience. If, however, we may judge by many of the present experiments in the teaching of civics, the second is what they are being taught.

Clearly the key to the educational situation, so far as it has to do with the character rather than the amount of the education provided, rests largely with the teachers. It cannot be said that this is at the present time an inspiring thought. We have

so wretchedly underpaid our teachers, at least in the schools supported out of public funds, that we have not got the best material. We have also so muddled their education and technical training that we have not made the best use even of the material which we can get. Teachers' Training Colleges and the sections of Universities and University Colleges which are devoted to the training of teachers are in too many cases a laughing stock, while teachers themselves are unfortunately regarded by the general public as being too often prigs and to some extent charlatans. The plain fact is that the teacher, miserably underpaid and of very doubtful social status, is usually trying hard to make headway against adversity to keep himself, or herself, respectable and to bear up against the intolerable drudgery of teaching huge classes uninteresting things according to uninteresting machine-made rules. There are, of course, thousands of exceptions. There are teachers who throw themselves into the Labour movement and the working-class educational movement. There are the teachers who throw themselves into their own profession and manage to make even the drab surroundings of the ordinary Elementary School a place of light and leading for those whom they have to teach. They are heroes and heroines, but they cannot for long, or save as exceptions, make headway against the difficulties which they encounter.

This then, is what is. Mr. Edmond Holmes, in the most eloquent book written about education in

recent years, has told us what might be, but even he has not told us how to get it. He has, indeed, suggested that until we get education we shall not get anything else that is worth having; but he has not fully realised that it is at least equally true to say that until we get other things that are worth having we shall not get education. As long as the economic system and the needs of the few under that system are allowed to dominate our entire social organisation we must not expect education to be immune from this general domination. It is all very well to say that the aim of education is essentially to draw out the individuality of every student, but you will not catch our ruling classes showing any great enthusiasm for education of that sort. Do they not, indeed, owe their rule to the fact that most people's individuality is in a state of chronic suppression?

The importance of education to the Labour Movement cannot be overestimated; but it would be the height of folly for the Labour movement to concentrate all its endeavours upon the educational system, for the key to the provision of the right kind of education, at least so far as our public Elementary and Secondary Schools are concerned, lies in the economic system itself. The present educational order may be slightly modified, but it will not be overthrown unless and until the workers succeed in overthrowing the present economic system. The vicious circle is that they are only likely to succeed in overthrowing the economic

system when they are better educated, and the moral of these two half-truths is that they must try to press on along both paths at the same time. They must at the same time go all out for education, and education of a better kind, and they must also concentrate their efforts upon securing greater economic power and control. While they are doing these things they can also to some extent provide—not, perhaps, for the children, but for the adult working class—certain types of education and training which will not, indeed, take the place of the education which ought to have been given in childhood and adolescence, but which will at least do something to remedy the more glaring defects. The movements towards working-class education which are discussed in the next chapter are of the greatest possible importance, because to some extent they serve to resolve the dilemma that a better educational system must precede economic emancipation, while economic emancipation must precede a better educational system.

One last word, and we must leave the general question of the educational system. There is one thing which the working classes must particularly remember when they are pressing for better education for themselves and their children. They must beware of accepting the educational ideal which is presented to them by the ruling classes; the ideal of education as a means to a means, and not as a means to an end. The ruling classes think of the education of the poor as a means to efficiency

which is itself a means and only a means to the good life. The working class must beware either of accepting this ideal as it stands or of substituting for it the ideal of education merely as a means to revolution, which in itself only a means to the good life. It is true that education will be the most powerful means to revolution, but it will have this effect most if it is less consciously directed towards it, if it is regarded as itself a necessary means to the good life. Oscar Wilde once remarked that all art was absolutely useless. We might do worse than say that all education is absolutely useless. Neither remark is true, but both of them are inspired lies.

CHAPTER IX: PROLETARIANISM

IT is a question that has been posed again and again in the history of Labour and Socialist agitation how far the working class, or proletariat, ought to have a culture and an "ideology" of its own. In France, the question has been debated in the most fascinating fashion in the books of the Syndicalist intellectuals. MM. Lagardelle, Berth and Sorel. In this country, it has risen to prominence in connection with the "extremist" working-class movements represented by the Socialist Labour Party, the Central Labour College, and the Plebs League.

In a most interesting book, very recently published, a leading member of the Socialist Labour Party sets out to analyse the nature, origin and function of the State. For the moment, I am concerned not with his argument, but merely with his bibliography. To each chapter he appends a list of books for further reference. It is not venturesome to say that of all the professors and intellectuals who so learnedly discuss the nature of the State not one in ten has ever heard of one in ten of the books which he mentions. These books are not all by members of the working class, or even of the Socialist Movement; but, taken as a whole, they do represent a quite different starting-point and a quite different culture from the accepted culture of our times.

A similar phenomenon may be to some extent observed in the classes conducted under the auspices of the Central Labour College and in the articles published in the "Plebs Magazine." These "ex-

tremists" of the working class are rejecting not merely the conclusions of what they term "bourgeois economics" and "bourgeois history," but also the methods and the text-books. They are setting out, with very inadequate resources and equipment, it is true, but with the high confidence which comes from certainty, to create a new proletarian learning and a new proletarian culture. Naturally, they cannot make their break with the past absolute, or do over again all the research which has been done in the past by "bourgeois intellectuals"; but they show a marked tendency rather to narrow their culture and keep it as "proletarian" as possible than to widen it at the expense of too great a dilution by bourgeois influence.

It is easy to decry this movement by pointing to its absurd narrowness and lopsided culture, and to the inadequacy of the foundation of historical knowledge on which it rests; but it is far less worth while merely to decry its imperfections than to enquire why it has arisen, and how far it is on the right lines.

No one who approaches history or economics with Labour sympathies can fail to realise the inadequacy of most of the books which "bourgeois culture" has provided. Moreover, the text-books are far more inadequate than the more advanced specialised studies. Not only are most of them strongly biassed in favour of things as they are: not only do they constantly import their disputable conclusions into their descriptions and offer as facts

what are highly controversial theories: they also quite omit many of the things which the working class student or adherent is most anxious to know, and to assign to such events as they do mention a place in their narrative and argument which is immensely inferior to their real importance.

There are, of course, notable exceptions to this general indictment. John Richard Green's "History" and H. D. Traill's "Social England" set a fashion which has been followed in many subsequent books; while Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's books stand out above all others among the more advanced and specialised studies in which the working-class student can find the facts he wants. But when he is confronted with the vast literature of capitalist bias which is commended to his notice in connection with every subject that concerns him, can we wonder if the alert and conscious working-class student is inclined sometimes to thrust all this stuff behind him, and to seek for a new knowledge and a new culture of his own?

I agree that, to a considerable extent, he is making a mistake, though he is not altogether mistaken; but his mistake is at least easily understood, and deserves the fullest understanding.

What is true of books is true of teachers also. The keen working-class student is apt to find in most bourgeois teachers exactly the same causes for dissatisfaction as in bourgeois books. Bias, acceptance as axioms of disputable theories, and, above all, failure to tell the student just the things

he wants to know, or to enter into the student's scale of values in such a way as to assign to various points the degrees of relative importance which he assigns to them—these are the prime defects of most bourgeois tutors from the point of view of the class-conscious worker. "A Worker Looks at History" is the title of a small book recently published by a Central Labour College lecturer, and the very title serves to emphasise the difference in point of view. It is not so much that when the class-conscious worker "looks at history" he sees things differently, though he does this, as that he sees different things. Different facts outstand, and the facts group themselves to his view in a different manner.

It is true, then, that for real and effective working-class education, most of the text-books will have to be re-written, at least so far as history and economic science are concerned. It is also true that, to a great extent, tutors will have to be differently trained if they are to be brought into a right relation to their students. But it does not follow from this that the working-class has to make a totally new culture, or that the bridges between it and bourgeois culture ought to be broken down. It follows rather that the working class ought to make all speed with the creation of teachers and text-books to suit its needs, but that it ought to be ready to avail itself of all really friendly assistance in the process.

There is grave danger in a narrowing of culture,

or a confining of it within rigid limits. There is also grave danger that, in building up a "working-class culture," the workers will merely repeat the errors of the bourgeoisie. Finding half-truths in the bourgeois historians and economists, they may all too easily put into their own works only that other half of the truth which these writers have left out. And, in the same way, their teachers may teach only that half of the truth which finds no place in bourgeois teaching. If they do this, I do not say that they will be as bad as the bourgeois; but they will be fighting the bourgeois with the weapons of the bourgeois, and with vastly inferior resources—that is to say, if they play at that game the bourgeois will beat them.

What is worth while for the working class is simply "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." They must not narrow their culture in order to make it exclusively proletarian; they must widen it in order to admit those elements which bourgeois culture has excluded. They must correct the defects of existing cultures, not by making a new counter-culture of their own, but by tearing out the discreetly veiled facts from the works of the bourgeois writers and setting them boldly side by side with the facts which those writers are eager to obtrude. They must not suppress the facts which make against them, or ignore the powerful books which have been written by bourgeois thinkers: they must build upon bourgeois culture, and they must transcend it.

If they will do this they will be perfectly right in training their own teachers as far as possible from their own ranks and in writing their own text-books and doing their own research. But they will be no less wrong if they seek to impose upon their tutors and their text-books some rigid test of orthodoxy or belief in a theory, however much they may believe their "doxy" to be right and their theory to be true. If they want to train their own teachers and to write their own text-books they must give their own men the best possible training, and then leave them free to believe, teach and write as they choose.

To some extent, the bourgeois have learnt this lesson. They do leave considerable freedom to their teachers and writers, especially in the older Universities, where the power of capitalism is less immediately felt than in the industrial centres. It is true that this tolerance is apt, in many cases, to stop short at a teacher or writer who openly professes highly dangerous economic views; but it is none the less very really present. Its presence is, moreover, the only guarantee that real educational work will be done, and makes just the difference between, say, a real University and a theological training college.

When the working class sets out to make its own educational institutions, it must bear very clearly in mind the gulf between a real University and a sectarian training college. It is the principle recognised by educationists—in theory, at least—

that training should follow education, and should be based upon it. That is to say, the training of a good Unitarian or Presbyterian Minister* involves that he should first be educated at an institution which is not sectarian and does not provide sectarian teaching, and then trained at a sectarian college.

Exactly the same principles apply to working-class education. Technical training based upon the acceptance of some particular social theory should only follow upon education free from any such implication. I do not mean that education should be free from a working-class interest and pre-occupation, but that it should not be based upon the acceptance of any particular dogma or doctrine about the working class. "Marxian education," however much we may believe in Marx, is not education, but sectarian training.

Of course, the working class may accept the Roman Catholic and Established Church view, and may desire to indoctrinate the workers from the earliest possible moment with some particular social theory. If so, it will no doubt conduct Marxian Socialist Sunday Schools, and perhaps even Marxian *crèches* and kindergartens for good "rebel" children, and follow them up with Marxian classes for adolescents and adults. If they do this, I believe that they will be merely imitating the wrongs done by the present ruling classes, and denying the real meaning of education.

* This, I know, is not the theory of the Roman Catholic, or even of the Established, Church.

Let me be quite clear. I am not denying the value or desirability of Marxian classes. Far from it: I am more than anxious to see them extend. But I do hold most strongly that they ought to follow upon education which is not of a similar sectarian type, and that they will serve to narrow and distort the character of many of their students unless they are preceded by such education.

The Central Labour College—and, still more, its auxiliary, the Plebs League—wage unceasing war against the largest of the agencies for adult working-class education—the Workers' Educational Association. This is a body with branches in all parts of England and a considerable individual membership; it has also a large number of affiliated Trade Unions and other Labour and educational bodies. It runs many classes of its own; but for the most important part of its work—the conducting of Tutorial Classes—it works jointly with the various Universities through special joint committees. These Tutorial Classes are paid for partly by private subscription and Trade Union grants, but also by grants from the Universities and Colleges and from the Board of Education and the local authorities.

The Marxian extremists denounce the W.E.A. as a "fake" organisation, nominally out to serve the interests of Labour, but really devoted to the preservation of the existing economic order. They point to its subscription list, which does indeed include subscriptions from strange persons, and to

its connection with the bourgeois Universities and with the Board of Education. They also denounce many of its tutors as reactionaries, and appeal to Trade Unions to withdraw their support from it.

It must not, however, be imagined that the C.L.C. spends all its energy in denunciation. It is itself a most active institution, conducting not only full-time courses in its own building, but also classes in many parts of the country. It has achieved the greatest success among the miners in South Wales, and is now jointly owned and controlled by two great Trade Unions—the National Union of Railwaymen and the South Wales Miners' Federation.

If what we have said above is correct, the Tutorial Classes of the W.E.A. and the Marxian training of the C.L.C. have really different functions to perform. The former should be the nucleus of the working-class University, the latter of the propagandist training college. The business of the one is to give the adult workers the opportunity of a good general education; that of the other is to provide special technical training upon the basis of that education.

It is true that neither institution is as yet at all perfectly adapted to the carrying-out of these functions. It is open to doubt how long the co-operation between working-class bodies, Universities and the Board of Education can be preserved unless both the Universities and the State are made far more democratic by working-class action. In

practice, tutors under the Tutorial Class scheme have so far been left comparatively free to do their work in their own way, and this has meant that, as a rule, the classes have secured the sort of tutor whom they want; but it is clear that the maintenance of the independence of class and tutor alike fundamentally depends on the amount of control which the Labour movement exercises over the W.E.A., and the amount of active pressure which, through the W.E.A. and directly, it puts upon the State and the Universities. If there is complaint as to the actual working of the W.E.A., the remedy is for the Labour movement to exercise over it a full and complete control. This the constitution of the W.E.A. makes perfectly easy.

On the other hand, the Central Labour College is at present by no means perfectly adapted to the *rôle* which I have suggested for it. It is at present conducting classes for those who have not the previous education which I regard as essential. It is, moreover, even when it is dealing with more advanced students, far too narrow and *doctrinaire* —far too apt to insist not merely on Marxism, but even on a rigid interpretation of Marxism along very controversial lines. It has all the defects which we have seen to be inherent in the attempt to create a new and separate working-class culture. But it has also the sovereign merit of being very much alive, and this great practical merit outweighs its theoretical defects.

In fact, the need for working-class education is

at the present time so overwhelming and the existing facilities so meagre that any honest organisation that will step into the breach is doing good work. Later, there will have to be a co-ordination and a clearer understanding of the principles at stake; but for the present there is room for all.

The theoretical issue which I have raised is therefore not so much immediate as fundamental. It is fundamental because it raises the whole question of the possibility of co-operation between the class-conscious workers and the Socialist bourgeoisie. It is a curious fact that among the most vindictive apostles of a purely working-class culture, and the most vigorous opponents of bourgeois intervention in working-class affairs, are men who are themselves bourgeois by origin and training. M. Sorel is an outstanding example from France: Great Britain is rapidly breeding her own as the youth of the bourgeoisie becomes disillusioned and disgruntled with the existing system. No one is so likely to denounce the bourgeoisie and all its works as the bourgeois who has become disgruntled with his own class.

This mood, however, is a reaction, and the same may be said in some measure of the extreme proletarians among the workers themselves. They react, naturally and inevitably, against the dominance of the bourgeois, and they become Sinn Feiners of Labour. No one can blame them, even if he regards their attitude as unwise.

For the fact is that Labour has need of all the weapons and of all the good-will that it can muster in its fight against the existing order. It is recognised that the most serious handicap to it in its struggle is the lack of knowledge and education. Even in the hands of the bourgeoisie, education has a value which cannot be replaced by anything else, and the men who have received a first-class education have a power which cannot be taken from them. If they are willing to help Labour, they can render very great help. The last thing they ought to desire is that Labour should hand over to them any actual control: they should be only advisers, placing their knowledge and skill at the disposal of Labour to do what it likes with them. This function those who are true friends of Labour will most willingly accept: those who seek power over Labour are better outside the Labour movement.

The proletarians, then, are wrong if they reject the help of tutors trained by the Universities before they have had time or opportunity to train equally well tutors of their own. To adopt this attitude is to narrow their movement, and to refuse for a false theory help of which they stand sadly in need. Heaven forbid that the working class should continue to take their education entirely from men of another class than their own; but Heaven forbid, too, that they should exclude all others than those of their own class. What is wanted is the abolition of classes, and the best

way to that is not a new class-exclusiveness even more rigid than the old.

Marx is a sadly misused writer. The German Marxians give one interpretation of him, the French Syndicalists a second, the British Industrial Unionists a third. There is a terrible tendency in all men to make rigid and abstract systems, and this tendency is especially marked in the making of a new culture. I yield to none in admiration for Marx as an economic thinker, particularly in the sphere of historical method, but the attempt to make out of Marx's controversial writings a rigid system seems to me to rest on a misunderstanding. Marx wrote not in order that we might regard his works for evermore as the "basis and finale" of all economics, or as the foundation for a new cultural system, but in order to assert his own view and refute that of his contemporaries. He did great work; but it is our business to pass beyond him. As soon as we begin to regard him as a prophet or as a god we are apt to lose our balance, and to fall into extravagant interpretations of his writings. In fact, it is all too often true that—

"The evil that Marx wrote lives after him:
The good remains interrèd in his books."

The proletarians are too eager to find a system to cling to. They have dug bourgeois culture up by the roots: let them beware lest they plant in its place a proletarian culture no less abstract and intolerant.

CHAPTER X: THE STATE

ONE of the spheres in which "proletarianism" finds, at the present time, its most intense expression is that of political theory The Marxian Industrial Unionists contend that the State is, by origin and function alike, the protector of property and the inveterate and unrelenting enemy of the dispossessed classes. They hold, not merely that the State of to-day expresses the ideas and desires of the dominant economic class, but that "the State" only came into existence at all with the rise of that class and for its protection, and that, with the passing of that class, the State itself will pass away. The Commonwealth of the future, they hold, will have its administrative machinery, but this machinery will be not "a democratised State," but an economic organisation representing the working class, and based upon the industrial grouping of the working class.

It is always easier to understand an actual thing than a theory, and the history of Russia during the period since the first Revolution of 1917, enables us to see in action the theories of the Marxian Industrial Unionists. The first Revolution resulted in a partly democratised, or at least in a constitutional, State. The theory behind the calling of the Constituent Assembly was that it would result in a completely democratised State. The Bolsheviks, however, regarded the Constituent Assembly as a sham, because they did not believe in a democratised "State" as the basis of the new Russian Commonwealth. Their watchword was "All power for the Soviets," or, in other

words, the substitution for the State of a social organisation based upon the economic grouping of the working class. The theory behind the Bolshevik régime in Russia, at least in the minds of those who desire its permanence, is essentially the same as the theory of Marxian Industrial Unionism all the world over. It is based upon the economic interpretation of history, and upon the view that, as the State is the political expression of the Capitalist System, so the Soviet régime is the expression of Socialism.

We must not, of course, push our actual instance too far. It is quite possible for a Russian or for a foreigner to sympathise with, and to support, the Soviet régime as a necessary expedient in a period of transition, without regarding it as a satisfactory form of permanent social organisation. The National Guildsman, or even the Collectivist who is a Socialist, may well accept the necessity that, where revolution takes place, the working class should adopt, even exclusively, during the period of transition, the form of organisation which offers the readiest opportunity for rapid mobilisation of working-class forces and full utilisation of economic power. If the method of passing from Capitalism to Socialism is by violent revolution, as in Russia, the working class can hardly be expected to take any different course. The dissolution of the machinery of Capitalistic Society makes imperative the immediate improvisation of a social structure capable at least of

"carrying on"—of furthering revolution and of resisting reaction. But it does not follow that the improvised structure of the transition period affords a complete basis for the structure of the Commonwealth when the transition period is over. Nor does it follow that, where the change from Capitalism to Socialism takes place without violent revolution, a similar improvisation will become necessary.

We are dealing, then, not with the immediate causes which made inevitable the emergence of the Soviet régime in Russia, but with the theory which regards that régime, or something like it, as the necessary expression of the change from Capitalism to Socialism. It is on this point that I join issue with the Marxian Industrial Unionists and with the advocates of "Proletarianism" in general.

Let us first rehearse our points of agreement. It is true that the State of to-day is mainly and in the last resort the political expression of the economic power of Capitalism. It is also true that any State, in a Commonwealth in which there are classes, is necessarily in the last resort the political expression of the economic power of the dominant economic class.

Secondly, it is true that the fundamental power, in any Commonwealth in which there are classes, is economic power, and that the road to emancipation lies through the conquest of economic power by the working classes.

But it is not true either that "the State" would

become unnecessary, or that the State would necessarily cease, with the abolition of Capitalism and the coming of Socialism. Nor, secondly, is it true that, in a Commonwealth freed from class distinctions, economic power would still precede and dominate political power.

Let me elaborate these points. The capitalist class, which is dominant in the economic sphere, has none the less found it convenient and necessary to express its domination, not only in the economic, but also in the political, structure of society. Why has this dual expression of Capitalism been found convenient and necessary? Because the economic organisation of Capitalism is not fitted to perform all the functions which are socially necessary to Capitalism, and because the political organisation of Capitalism (*i.e.*, the State of to-day) is fitted to perform certain functions which are socially necessary to Capitalism.

I can best make this point clear by imagining, or rather by finding in history, a condition of Capitalism not complicated by serious pressure from the working class. Let us imagine Capitalism free to exploit the wage-system without serious or organised resistance from the wage-slaves—*i.e.*, a social condition in which Labour really is a pure commodity. We shall not, of course, find such a condition of affairs any where or when completely in historical existence; but the condition of England during certain periods since the Industrial Revolution has been largely this,

notably in the early period of the Revolution, and still more about 1850, after Chartism, Owenism and the Corn Law Agitation had receded, and before the rise of the modern Labour Movement. Would, or did, Capitalism, in such circumstances, desire to abolish the State as unnecessary, or would it find in the State a most useful means of expression?

Of course, the reply will be made that, in such circumstances, the threat of internal revolution or external aggression is always potentially present, and that the State exists and is desired as a means of coercion. But this only leads to a further question. Why does not Capitalism, in such circumstances, organise coercion on an economic basis, as the violent revolutionaries would have the working class organise it, or as the Soviet régime in Russia has actually organised it? We are back at our old question. Why does Capitalism choose to adopt and cleave to a dual system of organisation?

This question can be answered best, in the first place, in relation to the abstract Society which we have imagined—a Society in which, *ex hypothesi*, the convenience and self-expression of the Capitalist class is the only thing that calls for consideration. I reply that the dual organisation, economic and political, would be adopted because it would be more convenient, and more expressive of the will of the members of the Capitalist class. In such a Society there would be functions which the

economic structure would not be well adapted to perform. What, then, are these functions?

First, there are many functions which have no direct connection with industry and are not directly economic, although, of course, the predominant economic system conditions and moulds them. Law and justice, national and local administration, questions of public health and education, have many non-economic aspects with which a body based upon purely economic groupings is not well fitted to deal, either in the interest of a particular class or in that of the community. Moreover, even in relation to economic questions, our dominant class would be consumers as well as producers, and it would suit them to have a special body to render articulate their point of view as consumers and to undertake the work of administration on their behalf as consumers. This would, indeed, be far more the case in our imaginary Society than it is to-day; for, under present conditions, the State is continually perverted from its proper functions and used as the agent of oppression on behalf of the ruling classes against the ruled. If the motive for such perversion were removed, the State would not die; it would assume the function of caring for those concerns of the ruling classes which directly affect them not as producers or capitalists, but as users or consumers or dwellers in a particular area.

In our imaginary Society, the State exists still purely as the political expression of the economi-

cally dominant class. It is desirable as a means of expression to that class, quite apart from the class-struggle, and the desire for it would subsist even if there were no risk of popular self-assertion, as is indeed now the case in many half-developed countries, including some of our own Colonies. The reason why this is so is that the State is fundamentally and in its true nature an organisation adapted to the carrying out of certain specific functions which must to some extent be performed in any social system. The need for the State does not arise out of the institution of property, or out of Capitalism, or out of the class-struggle: it arises because certain jobs want doing, and it is the organisation that is best suited to do them.

This truth is not readily understood to-day because the class-struggle is so real and present a fact—because the State is constantly diverted from its job to take part in the class-struggle, usually on behalf of the ruling class. This will be inevitably the case as long as a ruling class exists and a dispossessed class has vigour enough to oppose it. It would be no less the case if the present social system were inverted, and the workers were placed in power and the present ruling class in subjection.

Socialism, however, sets out not to make the proletarian class dominant over other classes, but to abolish classes altogether. What, then, would be the relation of the State to the organisation based on economic grouping in a Commonwealth without class-distinctions?

The Marxian Industrial Unionist holds that the State, in such a Commonwealth, would be at best only an unnecessary replica of the economic structure of the Commonwealth. Is this argument really sound? I think not; for I believe that the dominance of economic power over other forms of power is essentially dependent on the existence of classes, and that the abolition of class-distinctions would result in a liberation of the State from the domination of economic interests, and would thereby set it free to mind its own proper business. The domination of economic over other sources of power necessarily depends on the existence of classes, of "material" for industry to exploit, and, with the disappearance of this factor, the economic domination of Capitalism, or of any industrial organisations, over the State would largely cease. For the domination of economic interests in the Commonwealth has its root in the fact that a class-conflict is in progress, and that the dominant class is naturally impelled to use the State as a secondary weapon of defence and aggression.

This class-conflict once removed by the abolition of class-distinctions and the establishment of a democratic industrial system, the way will be clear for the re-creation of the State on truly democratic lines. The State will then, and not till then, be set free for the fulfilment of its proper functions in a democratic Commonwealth. What will these functions be?

They will resemble, and at the same time differ from, the functions assigned to the State in our imaginary pure Capitalist Commonwealth. There will be, in the first place, functions not economic in character, including the non-economic aspects of law and justice, national and local administration, many questions of public health, education and recreation, the amenities and utilities of the national life. They will be primarily administrative rather than governmental—that is to say, the element of coercion will be gradually disappearing from them. They will express, in this aspect, the non-economic common needs, purposes and desires of the citizens of the Commonwealth. They will, no doubt, be largely decentralised; for with the winning of freedom, local life and co-operation will spring into new vigour. Largely, they will be exercised by local bodies, with only a general co-ordination through a national State.

Secondly, there will be economic functions, and in relation to these the State and the local Communes or administrative bodies will represent the common economic needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth, their common use of the goods and services which are produced and rendered for them. In this aspect, the State will represent the "consumers," or, better, the *users*, or, better still, the citizens as users of the various goods and services.

In fact, if we are to sum up in a phrase the function of the State in a democratic Common-

wealth, we shall say that it is to represent the whole of the citizens as consumers, users and enjoyers of goods, services, and amenities, and to fulfil the purposes which they have in common as dwellers together, conscious of their community and common life in a single Society.

This is, indeed, a very different function from that which is exercised by the State of to-day, and a function which can only be exercised when the Commonwealth is freed from class-domination and class-conflict. But again my questioners will ask, Why is it necessary to have a separate organisation to represent the citizens as consumers, users and enjoyers? Why cannot the economic organisation of Society do all the work that is needed in the Commonwealth?

My reply is two-fold. In the first place, as we shall see more clearly in the next chapter, men group themselves in different ways for the doing of different things—for the execution of different sets of purposes. They cannot find full communal expression for their personalities through a single form of organisation. Institutions which exist for specific purposes can be truly representative of the common purposes of their members, whereas no institution can really represent men in general, apart from specific purposes which they have in common. As soon as an attempt is made to give to one institution, or type of institution, a universal reference, or to include in its scope, or place under its ultimate authority, the whole work

of Society, that institution, or type, ceases to be really representative and becomes misrepresentative of the will of its members. Functional democracy is possible, if difficult: no real democracy is possible in a Commonwealth which is under a single sovereign institution.

It is a confirmation of this view that different types of representative institution bring different types of men to the front, and take different, though not necessarily contradictory, points of view without any necessary conflict of interest. It is not primarily a question of interest in the ordinary sense, but of attitude. Each functional institution, rightly organised, tends to choose as its managers and administrators men of particular competence in relation to its particular function, and the only way of arriving at the General Will of Society is by putting these various attitudes and competences together. On the other hand, there is no such thing as an unspecialised attitude or competence, and that is one reason why our professional politicians, who take all Society for their province, are such lamentable failures. They are supposed to be something which does not exist—the all-round man or the philosopher-king—and it is only natural that they make a most unholy mess of the job. If we want good men at the head of the Commonwealth, we must choose them for special competence and particular functions, and through institutions representing these particular functions. And in order to do this, we must base

the organisation of our Commonwealth on the idea of functional democracy.

The second reason for at least dual organisation in the Commonwealth goes no less deep. Attention has often been drawn to the "paradox of representative government," by which one man or a few men are supposed to "represent" many thousands. In fact, this is not so much a paradox as a sheer untruth. Men cannot be represented, and any attempt to represent them is more or less abstract and misleading, however necessary some such attempt may be. It is agreed that the attempt must to some extent be made; but we ought to make it in such a way as to attempt to represent, not men as such, but specific purposes which certain men have in common. As soon as we try to represent men as such, we get misrepresentation, and the substitution for the wills of the "represented" of the wills of those who are supposed to represent them. The pigmy man is submerged in the Great State, which claims over him absolute jurisdiction as his representative and in his own name. But, in fact, the man is not represented: he is merely engulfed.

This character of distortion and substitution of the will of the "representer" for that of the "represented" exists, no doubt, in any "representative" institution; but it exists far less in institutions with specific and limited functions than in an institution which, like the State of to-day, claims unlimited and universal sove-

reignty. The solution lies in the abandonment of the idea of universal representation, and the substitution of that of functional representation. We shall not thereby eliminate the element of error, but we shall greatly reduce its proportions.

Moreover, there is safety in numbers. Under the scheme which I have outlined, the individual enters into, and is partially represented by, a number of different institutions consisting of varying groups of persons. He is not completely represented by any of them; nor is he completely represented by them all. For a great part of his life finds expression not through institutions at all, but directly in his individual and unorganised actions. He is therefore not submerged: nay, more, he is plainly and necessarily the pivot on which the whole system of institutions turns. For he alone has in him the various purposes of the various institutions bound together in a single personality. In "functionalising" democracy, in dividing sovereignty, and in securing thereby true if partial representation, lies the hope of freedom for the individual.

The State, then, as I conceive it, is not an absolute or universally sovereign authority: it is merely a functional expression among other functional expressions of the common will of the men and women who compose the Commonwealth. It may be the most important institution in the Commonwealth; but it is not the Commonwealth, and it does not and cannot by itself

represent the Commonwealth or "sustain the person" of the Commonwealth. For it is of the essence of the Commonwealth that it has no "person" to be sustained: personality belongs only to the individual men and women who are its citizens. These men and women make various institutions to express their common purpose; but no institution which they make can, in the last resort, completely represent them, or claim over them absolute and final authority. The State, in short, is an administrative institution with the specific function of representing men and women not as such, but as consumers, users and enjoyers in common of the goods, services and amenities which nature and labour afford.*

* For a fuller discussion of the question raised in this chapter, see "Self-Government in Industry," Chapter III.

CHAPTER XI: THE ORGANISATION OF FREEDOM

WE have been the victims during the past century of a continuous wrangle concerning the true nature of freedom, and at the end of it all—after the Benthamites and the Kantians and Mill and Mr. Bosanquet have said their worst—we are still not very much nearer the true conception of what freedom means.

Broadly speaking, there have been two opposing views, although, of course, these views, as in Mill, have shaded into one another to a considerable extent. The first view is that which conceives of freedom purely as anarchy, as an absence of restriction on liberty. On this showing the less society and the less organisation there are, the more freedom there is. "Man is born free and he is everywhere in chains," said Rousseau. Rousseau meant something very well worth saying by that remark, but many of those who have never read further in "The Social Contract" take it to mean simply that freedom is the absence of social restraint, and conceive of all government as an evil—albeit in some cases a necessary evil—because it involves a restriction upon freedom.

The nineteenth-century philosophers have made hay of this view of freedom, although it still has exponents in our own time in Lord Hugh Cecil, Mr. Wedgwood, and other strong individualists. Unfortunately, in exposing one false idea of freedom the nineteenth-century philosophers have only created another. Reacting against the view

that freedom consists simply in the absence of restraint, they have leapt to the paradoxical conclusion that freedom consists in the presence of a system of restraints. They affirm most strongly that freedom means, not a mere negative, but a positive condition of man, and therein they are certainly right. But they go wrong when they leap from this affirmation to the paradox of freedom as restraint. This is the burden, to some extent, of T. H. Green's famous preliminary chapter to the "Principles of Political Obligation," and much more of most recent Idealist writing. In this view freedom is conceived not as the absence of restraint but as the presence of law; and the evolution of society is envisaged not as a gradual binding of chains upon men's original freedom, but as the gradual evolution of a system of law, under which alone men can become free.

This view is based upon a philosophical theory of the nature of the individual. It rests upon the Kantian conception of moral freedom as it exists in the individual soul, and it is thence extended to cover political Society also. Just as the moral being who lives under the law which arises from his own self-determination is conceived as the only true free being, so the Society which lives most under a system of law is conceived as the freest Society.

There is, no doubt, up to a point, a good deal of truth in this second view. It is true that the individual soul can only find expression, and there-

fore freedom, by prescribing to itself laws, and it is also true that laws are essential to Society and to the freedom of the individuals composing Society. But it is not true either that the individual is the more free in proportion as he imposes upon himself more moral laws, or that the Society becomes more free in proportion as it imposes upon itself further laws. The truth is, if we take first the individual soul, that its need for abstract and general moral laws or rules arises from its imperfection and imperfect self-expression, and that as it fights its way towards a more perfect expression it can progressively dispense with the use of abstract rules or laws. The same is surely true of Commonwealths. The Commonwealth may have to take to itself laws for the articulation of freedom, but these laws will be most necessary in the earlier stages of social evolution, before the Commonwealth has reached real coherence in its working together. As the Commonwealth gradually reaches coherence and becomes more an established Society it will be able, like the individual, to dispense gradually with the artificial and abstract laws which it has laid down for its guidance, and to live after more concrete and universal principles.

It is true, then, that law is necessary to the expression of the Commonwealth and to the freedom of the individuals composing the Commonwealth; but it is absolutely untrue that the freedom of these individuals consists in being bound by the laws by which they and the Common-

wealth are regulated. The Commonwealth is, after all, a means to their freedom, and the laws which the Commonwealth prescribes to them are also, at the most, means to freedom, and not themselves a part of freedom. The fallacy of the Idealist conception of freedom as law lies in regarding what is essentially a means as an end, and in confusing the freedom of the individual with the mechanism adopted by the Commonwealth as a means to this freedom.

The freedom that ultimately matters is, above all, the freedom of individual men and women. It is agreed that, if this freedom is to find perfect expression, it requires organisation; and to treat the individual man or woman as isolated from other men and women is to cut away from each one a great deal of what is most important and vital. It is an abstraction to regard men solely as social creatures or solely as finding expression through the institutions, States, &c., of which they are members, ignoring their individuality which exists apart from, as well as in, such institutions; and it is no less an abstraction to regard solely their individuality apart from institutions, ignoring its expression in and through institutions.

The fundamental purpose which Rousseau had in view in "The Social Contract"—one of the greatest books ever written on social philosophy—was that of resolving the paradox of law and freedom in the Commonwealth. He saw clearly both that laws are not and cannot be the expression of

freedom, and that some method must be found of justifying law in the name of freedom. He did not state clearly or satisfactorily the answer to his problem; but he did at least make the problem clear. Can we, then, building upon the foundations which he has laid, arrive at any short and intelligible statement of the social relations and law of freedom? We shall be most likely to succeed in doing this if we look first at the relation which law and freedom bear in the individual man.

It will be hotly disputed by many philosophers, and still more by many moralists, but it is none the less true, that moral rules or laws are pure mechanism devised by the individual soul as a means to a better correlation of action with fundamental needs. By this I do not mean that there is no such thing as an absolute moral principle; but I do mean that there is no such thing as an absolutely valid moral rule which says "thou shalt not do such and such a thing" or "thou shalt do such and such a thing." All such particular commandments or laws are abstractions made by the mind for its own convenience. They are the scaffolding of human freedom; but they are not part of the building.

In exactly the same way the laws of the Commonwealth are scaffolding, but are not building. They do not form part of the actual structure of freedom either from the point of view of the individuals who compose the Commonwealth or from the point of view of any of the institutions

through which the Commonwealth finds expression. They are highly necessary, no doubt, but they are means and not ends. This is only another way of saying that anarchism, in the sense of absence of coercive organisation, is no less ultimately right than it is immediately and politically wrong. Through law we proceed to the absence of law, through self-limitation to a more complete and expressive freedom.

Let us now try to apply these principles rather more directly to the Commonwealth as it exists at the present time. We have in the Commonwealth many individuals each with his own moral code, each with a legislature and executive and judiciary sitting in his own soul. We have also these individuals combining, not only in what we call the State, including the local governing authorities, but also in a vast network of associations existing for all manner of special purposes of varying degrees of social import. In every institution included in this network there is again a body of law, a legislature and executive, and at least an improvised or rudimentary judiciary. The whole of the network of institutions, regarded from the point of view which has been stated in the preceding paragraphs, must be conceived as ultimately of the nature of means to the expression of the individual souls which compose the Commonwealth. For these souls cannot find complete expression in isolation or through personal codes of moral rules. They must also, if they are to find

the highest and fullest expression of which they are capable, express themselves co-operatively with other souls in relation to all manner of specific purposes and functions which they are impelled to perform. The rules which men make co-operatively through associations are therefore no less a part, but only rather less directly a part, of the means to the individual self-expression than the rules which they make in the Parliament of their own souls.

If the foregoing view is right, then it is indeed no paradox to speak of the organisation of freedom through institutions. It is only a paradox and an untruth to suggest that the institutions themselves embody this freedom. Freedom is essentially something which is realised by and in the individuals composing the Commonwealth, and not in the omnipotence of institutions over the individual—in fact, not in the Prussian State idea, but in the expression of the individuals, both in themselves and through, but not in, institutions. The Commonwealth itself is not and cannot be—save at that ultimate and unrealisable point at which everything finds its consummation in being everything else—an institution. It consists of individuals, but these individuals express themselves, not only through their personal conduct, but also through all manner of institutions. The Commonwealth, therefore, while it consists ultimately of individuals, consists also intermediately of these institutions which to some extent embody, and are

necessary to, the self-expression of the individuals. That is to say, if we would seek for the meaning of Commonwealth at its present stage of development we can only find it in a complex of individuals and institutions. John Smith and the Duke of Stow-in-the-Wold, the Brass Finishers' Trade Union, and the Brotherhood of the Fifth Gospel are all parts of, and essential to the structure of, the Commonwealth. But this structure is not, and cannot, be itself an institution. It is a complex of institutions and individuals, and such a complex cannot be unified into a single institution, again, except at infinity.

It follows that the organisation of freedom in Society consists in securing two things—first, the best and most perfect relationship of institution to institution within the Commonwealth;* and, secondly, the most perfect subordination of all institutions to the expression of the wills of the individuals whom they exist to express.

It is upon these principles, which it was not possible to state clearly at an earlier stage in our argument, that the whole of this book has been based. In the second chapter I tried to analyse the existing nature of the Commonwealth in so far as the individual wills on which it rests tend to be expressed or distorted through certain types of institutions. We saw there that, under the existing

* This ignores, for purposes of simplicity, the problem of institutions wider than a single Commonwealth. For a discussion of this point see my paper in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* Session 1915-16.

social and industrial order, peculiar importance attaches to economic and industrial groupings which serve, under present conditions, both to express more strongly than any others the wills of individuals, and also to distort those wills by forcing them into arbitrary class groupings. The problem of the organisation of freedom is that of removing this distortion while at the same time preserving and intensifying the expression of individual wills which is secured through these institutions.

In my view this involves, primarily, an insistence upon the two complementary principles—functional "institutionism" and democracy. The way in which individual wills express themselves most completely and readily in relation both to their personal and to their co-operative expression is through rules and institutions related to specific purposes or groups of purposes—that is to say, to specific functions. The real and vital principle of democracy is, in fact, as I have tried to explain clearly elsewhere,* a functional principle. Let me try to re-state this argument as briefly as I can, and in the simplest possible language.

No sooner do men begin to act in association, even in the most simple and rudimentary societies, than they are faced with the problem of representative government. In a small and simple society, such as the ancient City State, they may be able to keep the work of legislation in the hands of the

* See my *Self-Government in Industry*, Chapter III.

whole of the members, though even this practice will be difficult to maintain. But, in any case, they will be compelled to confer upon representatives, or magistrates, a considerable executive and administrative power which will tend inevitably to encroach upon the sphere of legislation. Moreover, as soon as the society becomes at all large, or complex, or geographically dispersed, the need for representative institutions will necessarily extend into the sphere of legislation.*

Representative institutions at once raise in the most acute form the problem of Sovereignty and of the relation of the individual to Society. Rousseau's contention that Sovereignty rests inalienably in the whole people and cannot be transferred to any representative governmental institution is based upon the view that the Commonwealth exists and is maintained by the positive wills, and not by the mere passive assent of its members, and that will is an inalienable property of the individuals in whom alone it exists. I believe this view to be absolutely and completely right.

In the Commonwealth of to-day practically all institutions are predominantly representative, or

* It is interesting to find Mr. J. T. Murphy, the latest spokesman of the "rank and file" movement in Trade Unionism, putting forward in his pamphlet on "The Workers' Committee," a theory of democratic government which amounts to a repudiation of the representative theory, at least in the sphere ot legislation. Mr. Murphy seeks to vest all ultimate industrial power in rank and file workshop meetings — a proposal which is obviously unworkable in any complete form in a national Trade Union Movement.

misrepresentative, in character. It therefore follows that no institution, and no combination of institutions, can be regarded as sovereign. Sovereignty rests inalienably with the individuals composing the Commonwealth.

At the same time, these individuals must find means of acting together, and they can do this, at the present stage, only through institutions which are mainly representative and even to some extent coercive. If none of the institutions can claim Sovereignty, to what extent can all or any of them claim service or loyalty?

We have seen that, for the guidance of their own lives, individuals make moral rules or laws, and prescribe to themselves courses of action and discipline and criteria of conduct. All such "individual" rules have to some extent a social element, and rest to some extent upon customary or socially recognised codes of conduct. They are, at the least, as Rousseau said in an inspired moment, acts of "tacit association."

The passage is easy from "tacit" to "formal" association. As soon as a purpose, or set or class of purposes, requires coherent co-operative action by a group of individuals, the need arises for formal association of a temporary or permanent character. The individuals concerned therefore unite in an association; but they do not make over to these associations, as in Rousseau's imaginary "Social Contract," "the whole person and goods of each associate." They merely put into the

common stock as much of their personalities as they regard as necessary to their common purpose, laying themselves either under no penalty, or under definite and limited penalties, if they fail to act according to the decision of the association.

This is clearly the method of establishment and working of the ordinary association at the present day; but, as we saw, in proportion as the association acquires importance, it tends to become compulsory for those who are concerned in its particular purpose, and also tends to work more by representative methods. When it reaches this stage of development, how does it stand in relation to the individuals who are its members?

Its claims to their loyalty are still based on its necessity to them, and to the expression of a purpose, or set of purposes, which they have in common. The compulsion which it imposes is still conditional upon their desiring to do the particular thing, or hold the particular view or belief, for the doing or holding of which the association exists. As soon as they cease to be concerned with that particular thing or belief, they can cease to be members of it, and its jurisdiction over them will lapse.

There are, however, certain forms of association which, while they still relate in their nature and principle of obligation to particular purposes or functions, relate to purposes or functions which must concern everybody, or nearly everybody, in the community. In such cases, the conditional

compulsion of the ordinary association becomes, or tends to become, an absolute compulsion.* This has long been true of States and local governmental institutions, and in the industrial Commonwealth of to-day it is rapidly becoming true of industrial associations, as it was true of the Church in past ages.

In proportion as the claim of an association to compulsory membership acquires this absolute, or quasi-absolute, character, its claim upon its members tends towards absolutism. The first check upon arbitrariness in the ordinary association is the power of the individual to escape its obligations by resigning membership. As membership becomes compulsory this check is removed, and the institution tends to claim Sovereignty over the members. Nor is a very effectual check imposed even if there are several similar institutions, and the individual can change from one to another by emigrating from Germany to the United States, or by leaving the mines and becoming a railwayman. For, the more complex Society gets, the more difficult such changes become in some cases, and the more the institutions between which the individual has to choose become assimilated.

Yet it is surely clear that the institution cannot base any claim to Sovereignty on the fact that everyone has to belong to it. For, though it con-

* It is still in the strictest sense conditional, just as categorical judgments may be regarded as, in the strictest sense, hypothetical.

cerns everyone, it is very far from concerning, or expressing, the whole of everyone. All the individuals within, say, a national group may be its members; but each of these individuals probably belongs to other associations as well, and has, moreover, a life apart from organised associations which may well express the best part of him.

My point is that institutions cannot substitute themselves for human wills by right, although they continually attempt to do so in fact. Institutions possess validity and impose obligations only in so far as they express purposes common to groups of individuals. They are an extension of the means of expression employed by individual wills, and as soon as they pass beyond this function, and try to substitute themselves for individual wills, they can claim no right.

The claim of institutions rests, then, not on the number of individuals which they include, or on the fact that they include everybody in a Commonwealth, but on the intensity and importance of the common purposes which they express, and on the intensity and "amount" of will that individuals put into them. This brings me to my next point.

The intensity of the common will in an association depends upon the definiteness and importance of its common purpose. I do not mean that the purpose can always be clearly defined in so many words; but I do mean that it must be definitely understood and felt by the members—that is to say, obligation depends upon function.

This being so, the place of institutions in the Commonwealth is determined by the importance of their respective functions to the individuals composing the Commonwealth, and upon the degree of precision with which they are organised on functional lines. The respective importance of different functions can only be determined by the individuals in the unity of their wills, and the place of the various institutions will change as the individuals revise their valuations. The ultimate freedom of the individuals lies in their power to promote, or not to promote, institutions, and to arrange these institutions and assign to them their place in the Commonwealth. This power is one which cannot be delegated to, or represented by, any institution, and it is the essence of Sovereignty. Once more, then, we find that no institution can be sovereign.

This brings us back to the problem of representative government, with which our digression on the nature of institutions has put us in a position to deal. When Milton wrote that " the tenure of kings and magistrates is only derivative," he was stating a truth which, we have seen, is true of all institutions of every kind. But, as soon as we get rid of the idea that an institution can represent a man, we get rid of the paradox, though not of the problem, of representative government. Representative institutions represent, not men and women, but particular purposes which men and women have in common.

This still leaves the practical problem of securing that institutions shall represent and not misrepresent these particular purposes. As Rousseau saw, the will of the administrator or official in any institution has always a tendency to substitute itself for the will of the members. It is my contention that this tendency exists less in proportion as the purpose of the institution is clearly felt and understood by the members. Unspecialised representative "democracy" means a free play for governmental misrepresentation, such as we have in every State to-day: functional democracy, even if representative, affords a far better chance for the members to prevent misrepresentation and secure the expression, in each functional institution, of the common purpose with which they have formed or entered it.

This principle of functional democracy has not, in any sphere, been as yet clearly worked out in practice or even in theory. History, indeed, especially that of the Middle Ages and of quite recent times, affords an immense mass of material for its study; but this material is still largely unworked.* In the modern world it has been approached from two distinct points of view, from which, significantly, similar conclusions have been

* See, however, F. W. Maitland's *Introduction* to Gierke's *Political Theories of the Middle Ages,* and to some extent E. Lipson's *English Economic History in the Middle Ages.* See also for the idea, William Morris's writings, and Mr. A. J. Penty's *Restoration of the Guild System* and *Old Worlds for New.* See also Nitti's *Catholic Socialism.*

reached. In the sphere of religion, the advocates of religious self-government and Church independence have at least worked out the outline of a new theory based on the functional independence of Church and State, and movements expressive of this theory are rapidly gaining ground in many churches at the present time. Dr. Figgis is the foremost exponent of this movement in the Established Church, and he and some of those who apply the functional idea, are prepared to face the necessary corollary of Disestablishment.*

In the sphere of industry the functional idea finds its expression in the theory of National Guilds or Guild Socialism, which has dominated, or lurked behind, the whole of the book. I shall close this chapter with a brief account of this theory.

The idea of National Guilds, or Guild Socialism, has long been familiar to a limited circle of readers through the columns of the *New Age*, and has during the last few years reached a wider public through the publications and lectures of the National Guilds League, of which the writer is a

* See especially J. N. Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State,* the writings of the Rev. William Temple, the *Report of the Archbishops' Committee on the Relations of Church and State*, and the publications of the Life and Liberty Movement. For similar movements in other Churches, see Richard Roberts' *The Church in the Commonwealth,* in this series, and the *Free Catholic* (monthly). The *Church Socialist,* published by the Church Socialist League, forms a link between this movement and the industrial movement, and there are also many personal links in men such as George Lansbury, Conrad Noel, P. E. T. Widdrington, M. B. Reckitt, and others.

member. It is to be feared, however, that just recently its popularity has rather outrun the understanding of it; for of the many schemes which profess to embody its ideas only a few will stand the test of examination in the light of its principles. Moreover, its new-found popularity has drawn upon it a certain fire of criticism; but of the critics comparatively few seem to understand the real nature of the doctrine which they set out to confute.

It is therefore necessary to attempt a brief and clear statement of the principles of National Guilds. It is essentially a doctrine based upon the two fundamental principles of *function* and *self-government*. It sets before itself the ideal of finding that form of social organisation which will afford to the individual the fullest and freest power of self-development in an organised community. It wants men to be free, not merely in order to get good administration, but because freedom is in itself a good thing and the greatest of good things. It is essentially a theory of democracy and self-government in the fullest sense.

Secondly, it is a theory based on the idea of *functional* government. It holds that men can never really govern themselves unless they are organised on the basis of those functions and purposes which they have in common. It holds that the State, in the sense of a governing authority claiming supreme power in every sphere of social organisation, is the utter negation of self-govern-

ment, and that freedom can be found only in the division among a number of functional authorities of the universal competence now claimed by the State.

Guild Socialism is not, then, merely a theory of industrial reorganisation, though it finds in the industrial sphere its most immediate and practical expression. Its claim for self-government in industry is based on the view that the conduct of industry is a function, and, from the standpoint of social organisation, *the* function which at present, by its bad government, conditions all others.

Industry to-day is organised on the basis of the wage-system—that is to say, the producers are sharply divided into certain social classes. One class, which owns and controls the means of production, organises industry for the main, if not the exclusive, purpose of realising the maximum profit. Another class is compelled to sell its labour to the first class at a price determined by the higgling of the labour market. One class controls production and the product; the other can only live by surrendering to it the control even of its own labour.

This industrial system seems to National Guildsmen to be not only anti-social in its effects, but also in itself immoral and degrading. Against it they set up the ideal of industrial self-government. It seems to them that the only persons who have any claim to industrial control are, first, those who are actually rendering service in industry;

and, secondly, those who must live by using the products of industry. It therefore seeks to establish a system in which the administration of industry will be in the hands of the organised producers, while the State and the municipalities will express the point of view, and guard the interests, of the citizens as users of the national wealth.

With these sentiments many who are in no sense National Guildsmen may be tempted to agree; but perhaps they will be less ready to do so when Guildsmen go on to claim, in the economic sphere, absolute equality for the two forms of organisation. Their aim is not merely to secure functional devolution within the State, but to assert the equality of the organisations of producers and renderers of service with the State and the municipalities as representatives of the "users." This must not be misunderstood. As the "users" include every citizen in his capacity as "user," so under the term "producers" Guildsmen mean to include every citizen in his capacity of "renderer of services." They are not claiming equality for a part as against the whole; they are claiming equality as between all the citizens in one aspect and all the citizens in another aspect.

Concretely stated, the theory amounts to this. Where we have now a single Parliament, elected by geographical constituencies and claiming universal authority, Guildsmen want two "Parliaments," one geographical to represent all "users,"

the other industrial to represent the "producers." Matters affecting producer and user alike they want settled by joint agreement made by the two bodies.

This, of course, gives merely the dry bones of the Guild idea. It involves also the most democratic forms of government within the Guilds themselves, the greatest chance for individual self-expression and for local initiative and experiment. Guildsmen claim that by setting men free to manage their own affairs, in industries as well as in politics, local and national, we shall set free the vast resources of will and initiative which yet live in men, hard as the industrial system has striven to stamp them out.

These are the ideals of the National Guilds movement. Let us now look for a moment at its immediate policy. This is based upon the Trade Union movement. In order to secure for industry functional self-government to seek to strengthen and enlarge the organisations which the manual workers have built up for themselves, and to get them to adopt a policy directed towards industrial control. At the same time it sets out to democratise the State and to develop a political programme which will provide for the expression of the organised will of the whole body of users.

The industrial programme of Guild Socialism is clear. The Trade Unions must set before themselves the object of winning control in industry. This they can only do, first, by enlarging their own

organisations, and, secondly, by adopting a new policy. "Craft" unionism, which isolates skilled from unskilled workers, can never secure control; it must be replaced by union by industry, which brings together in one society all who are engaged in the rendering of a common service. This process is already going on in the Trade Union movement. But it is not enough for control to secure a complete combination of all *manual* workers. Step by step the Unions must push their control higher up the industrial scale by bringing into their ranks foremen, supervisors, experts, professionals—all those grades of management which are now regarded as pre-eminently in the employers' service. This process also, as we saw, is beginning to gather force.

As they do these things the unions must aim at gradually supplanting the employers in control. Beginning in the workshop, they must more and more take control out of the hands of the employers and transfer it to their own organisations. This involves, not joint control with the employers, but actual transference of control from the employers to the Trade Unions.

It is at this point that the ideas of National Guilds come into conflict with many of the proposals for "reconstruction." Recognising the urgency of the working-class demand for control, the "reconstructors" proffer the "olive branch" of *joint* control. This Guildsmen decisively reject. The Whitley Report proposes the setting-up of

certain joint machinery between employers and employed. Guildsmen differ in their attitude to this machinery regarded as a method of negotiation; but they are united in their opposition to any attempt to make it an instrument of joint control with the private employer.

This doctrine of National Guilds, of which I have written much more fully elsewhere, seems to me to have the merits without the defects of Marxian Industrial Unionism, and to arise inevitably and naturally out of the principles which I have been trying to expound. Its validity depends, of course, upon the truth of the view that political freedom—at least in modern Commonwealths—can be found only in a combination of the ideas of democracy and function. Those who desire to know more of its working out into a system which aims at coherence without rigidity, I must refer to the list of books given at the end of this volume.

CHAPTER XII: MEN AND WOMEN

THROUGHOUT this book I have dealt with the social problem primarily as a problem of human personality. I have regarded the Commonwealth, not as an end in itself, not as a super-person in which the personalities of its members are absorbed, but solely as a means of expression for the men and women who compose it, and for whom it exists. I have rejected the view that men and women exist "for the State," and affirmed that the Commonwealth, and still more the State and other institutions, exist for men and women. The Commonwealth was made for man, and not man for the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is not merely made by and for man: it is necessary to man. Men can only give expression to the will and the good-will that are in them by acting in concert and conjunction with their fellows. This concerted action they take sometimes by unorganised and purely personal co-operation; but as soon as the need for acting together extends beyond a particular or occasional act and involves a coherent course of action and a concerted policy, they are driven to form associations and institutions for the execution of their common purposes. Such organised co-operation may take many different forms according to the different purposes in view and the different degrees of coherence achieved. Organisation often begins in a purely experimental fashion, with a loose and purely voluntary association of very limited scope and power. Then, as it grows

in coherence and its purpose broadens and deepens, it acquires a wider function and a new power. As it develops, its voluntary character often becomes less marked. No one is perhaps literally compelled to join it; but if a man wishes to take part in the execution of some purpose, or to follow some profession, the time comes when he has virtually, or even actually, no alternative to membership of the association. Some of the professions—such as the Bar—have reached the stage of actual compulsory membership; while at the present time we can see membership of certain Trade Unions becoming virtually compulsory for those who wish to follow a particular occupation. Churches have had compulsory membership in many ages and countries; and, in developed countries, membership of the State, at least in the sense of subjection to its laws, is uniformly compulsory.

Any attempt to make the distinction between the State and other institutions one between voluntary and compulsory organisation breaks down. All institutions tend to become compulsory largely in proportion to their effectiveness and power. The State is indeed compulsory upon every person dwelling within a given area, whereas in most other institutions the compulsion is more obviously conditional. But this is only an apparent and not a fundamental difference. Fundamentally, as we have seen, the State is similar in character to other institutions: it exists

for men and women and for the expression of certain of their common purposes and desires.

Economics are the key to politics, and, if to-day the State is very far from complying with this description, it is because the existing economic system vitiates its action. Men who live under a servile industrial order cannot make good citizens, or be other than servile in the political sphere. It is only by changing the economic system that we can hope to change the character of the State, of the Commonwealth and of citizenship.

I tried in an earlier chapter to depict the effects of the present industrial system upon human character. I have now to say something further of the effect upon character of its abolition and the substitution of a saner industrial order. The majority of men and women have never had the chance of deciding what they want to be and to do, what manner of life they would choose to lead, and what work in the world they are best fitted to perform. There are some who hold up their hands in holy horror at the very idea that mere ordinary people should get such a chance—some who hold that "incentive" is the basis of all human endeavour, and can imagine no other forms of incentive than profits for the rich and the fear of want and starvation for the poor. Those who take this view believe that to set men and women free to decide what they will be and do by the removal of the iron rule of economic necessity would be to let loose on the world man's natural

sinfulness, and to give the Commonwealth over to selfishness and sloth. If people do believe that, I have no answer to them, and there is no answer. It is a matter, I will not say exactly of opinion, but of deeply-rooted spiritual conviction.

I do not pretend to know what men and women would make of their freedom if it were really secured to them. But I do *know* that, whatever they might make of it, they have nevertheless a right to that freedom. The one thing in the world that supremely matters is the free exercise of human will. What counts as an ultimate value is not the factual result, but the act of will. The only thing that is ultimately good is good-will.

Even, then, if we were convinced that the people, both collectively and individually, would make a hopeless mess of power and freedom, it would be none the less right that the power and freedom should be theirs. For even a mess made by their wills would be worth more than the most Leviathanic order imposed upon them from without. Those who denounce democracy as the "cult of incompetence" miss the point. Democracy may be competent or incompetent: the point is that democracy is right.

When I say "democracy," I want to be clearly understood. Democracy does not mean forcing on people the sort of reforms you want; it means setting people free, and keeping them free, to determine what it is that they want. What they want may seem to you to be very nasty; but it is

none the less your business to help in setting them free.

Having said this, I can safely go on and record my personal hopes and convictions as to what men would do if they were free to mould their own lives. If I am utterly wrong about what follows, my wrongness in prophecy in no way affects my main argument.

I share to the full William Morris's happy conviction that joy in life, and art as the expression of that joy, are fundamental, and, if you will, natural, to free men and women. I believe that, if men and women were set free, as they might be, from economic necessity, they would set with new manhood about the creation of the good life. Morris was supremely right in holding that the only art that is truly expressive and valuable is popular art—art arising directly out of the life and spirit of the people, and expressing their hopes and fears, their ideas and their conceptions of value. Such an art, he knew well, cannot exist under plutocracy. For, under plutocracy, art, like everything else, is perverted by economic distinctions. There are at least two arts, and both are false and defective. The art of the rich has inevitably about it the air of poison. It expresses the false ideals of a Society based on the subjugation and subjection of the people. The art of the poor, moreover, expresses for the most part the servile ideas which dominate the economic system. It is, as Mr. Ivor Brown puts it, merely a "gilding of

the chains." Good art—that is to say, art that expresses fine ideals, can live only in a Commonwealth based upon fine ideals.

Naturally, I am speaking here of art not in any narrow sense, but in the fullest sense of the word. I mean by it that combination into a single expression of utility and beauty which is the mark of free creation. I mean by it that joy in work which comes only of doing good things well, a joy which may be found in the doing well of any good thing. And, of course, I have especially in mind those finest forms of expression which past ages have found in "the arts," and above all in the supreme art of architecture.

Set men free, and I believe that they will turn by instinct to the making of good things well. They will be free to face the economic problem in a new way, to face the problem of machine production, and to turn machinery to its proper use as the servant, instead of the master, of men. Ninety-nine hundredths of the world's genius and invention to-day go absolutely to waste. Men make, not good things well for the joy of maker and user, but shoddy things ill for the profit of the lords of capital. It is the highest of missions to rescue the world from its intolerable servitude to base ideals.

But let me not be mistaken. I do not imagine, and I suppose no one imagines, that, if the world could be, and were, set free from Capitalism to-morrow, men would suddenly recover the art

of art, or, for that matter, the art of politics or of the Commonwealth. They would probably make a very great mess alike of the art of government and of the arts of production and service. But there would be a vital difference between that mess and the present condition of the Commonwealth. For the mess which free men would make would be alive and would have the character of free, if chaotic, creation, whereas our condition to-day is largely that of spiritual death and stagnation. If the change to a free Society were to come abruptly, as perhaps at some point it must, men would have to learn the art of art, as they would have to learn the art of government, from their mistakes. I believe that they would learn it, and that out of the chaos in which all free creation begins they would make a new order based on human freedom and free co-operation.

The artist and the professional, the creators and the critics and appraisers with them, are apt to hold aloof from politics and from the "politics" of industry. They are wrong to do so, because their future depends upon a revolutionary change in the economic system. Surely any artist who reflects upon the foundation of his craft must see that, unless it is based on the life of the people, it remains false and largely meaningless. The artists and the professionals ought to be foremost in the struggle for economic liberation, not because man's life ought to be primarily economic, but because it cannot be anything better until a free

order is brought out of the economic chaos. They should have, more than any other group in the community, a keen perception of the value of good making and doing, and of the limitations imposed upon them by the plutocratic system. Enlightened demand is vital to the artist; but, as long as the many are in subjection, they will, perforce, continue to demand shoddy goods and to be fobbed off with the service of charlatans. Nay, worse, they will not be able in most cases to tell the difference between good and bad making and doing.

I end this book, then, with an appeal to those who have already some conception of the goodness and the fullness of life. I want them to realise that the place of Labour in the Commonwealth to-day involves a denial of fullness and goodness, not merely to Labour, but to every worker by hand or brain. I want them to see that through the triumph of Labour, and through a revolutionary change in its status and power, lies the way not merely to a better economic order, but to a decent Society in which men of every temper and calling, except Prussians and bureaucrats, can find satisfaction. And I want them to know and feel this because they can play a great part, if they will, in bringing about this revolutionary change of system.

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A NOTE ON BOOKS

FOR a short introduction to Trade Unionism, see C. M. Lloyd's *Trade Unionism* (Black, 2s. 6d.) and my *An Introduction to Trade Unionism* (Allen and Unwin, 5s.). *My World of Labour* (G. Bell and Sons, 4s. 6d.) gives a rapid survey of the Trade Union Movement in various countries, and deals more fully with the position and problem of Trade Unionism in Great Britain. It also discusses the Labour problem from a wider point of view, and attempts to present a theory in addition to giving the facts. S. and B. Webb's *History of Trade Unionism* (Longmans, 7s. 6d.) is, of course, the standard history.

For National Guilds, see S. G. Hobson's *National Guilds* (G. Bell and Sons, 5s.) and his *Guild Principles in Peace and War* (Bell, 2s. 6d.), my *Self-Government in Industry* (Bell, 4s. 6d.), A. J. Penty's *Old Worlds for New* (Allen and Unwin, 3s. 6d.), M. B. Reckitt and C. E. Bechhofer's *The Meaning of National Guilds* (Cecil Palmer and Hayward, 7s. 6d.), A. R. Orage's *Alphabet of Economics* (Unwin, 4s. 6d.) and the pamphlets published by the National Guilds League (17 Acacia Road, London, N.W. 8.).

For Industrial Unionism, &c., see W. Paul's *The State* (Socialist Labour Press, 1s.), W. W. Craik's *Outlines of the History of the Working Class Movement* (117 Harvist Road, Kilburn, N.W., 1s.) and Mark Starr's *A Worker Looks at History* (Plebs League, 1s.).

See also Hilaire Belloc's *The Servile State* (Foulis, 1s.).

For political theory, see R. M. MacIver's *Community* (Macmillan, 10s.), Ernest Barker's *Political Theory from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day* (Home University Library, 1s. 6d.), F. W. Maitland's *Introduction* to Gierke's *Political Theories of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 10s.), my translation of Rousseau's *Social Contract and Discourses* (Everyman's Library, 1s. 6d.), Ramiro de Maeztu's *Authority, Liberty, and Function* (Allen and Unwin, 3s. 6d.), J. N. Figgis's *Churches in the Modern State* (Longmans, 5s.), Graham Wallas's *Human Nature in Politics* (Constable, 6s. and *The Great Society* (Macmillan, 10s.), and again my *Self-Government in Industry*.

I know of no good modern books on Education, except *What is and What Might be*, by Edmund Holmes (Constable, 4s. 6d.).

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